E45

Xmas 1924

To Edith

from Both

LIFE AND LETTERS OF MAGGIE BENSON

Photo by H. Waller Barnett, Knightsbridge.]

MAGGIE.
1906.
Aged 41. [*Frontispiece.*

LIFE AND LETTERS
OF
MAGGIE BENSON

BY HER BROTHER
ARTHUR CHRISTOPHER BENSON
MASTER OF MAGDALENE COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

LONDON
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET, W.
1917

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LIFE AND LETTERS OF MAGGIE BENSON

PROLOGUE

THERE were reasons, when I thought and talked about it with my mother, why I should not write a record of my sister's life, but none of them seemed to me good reasons.

Twenty years ago I wrote the life of my father in much detail, having previously written a brief memoir of my elder sister, and I lately made a short and simple record of my brother Hugh; so that it may be thought and even said that the world has heard enough about my family; but that is not a real reason for silence, because no one, after all, is compelled to read a book, although critics are apt to treat a writer who dwells much on kindred subjects as if he were a kind of Ancient Mariner, who goes about telling the same story, which one of three cannot choose but hear, though he may beat his breast at the sight of the merry folk trooping into the Hall to the sound of music, and wish to be among them.

But on the other hand, my sister had many friends who knew her at different times of her life,

and these at least would like to have the whole story brought together.

And then there is another reason, that the last years of my sister's life were spent under the shadow of a long and grievous illness, which clouded her mind, deprived her of light and happiness, gave her strange fancies and delusions, and often plunged her in enforced solitude. I saw much of her in these sorrowful years, when she dwelt much on old memories and happier days, and when her prisoned spirit beat its strong wings in vain.

But all who loved her—and there are many such—would grieve to feel that the sombre impressions of that last period should conceal and obliterate the recollections of what was a happy, useful, and always fine life, much baffled and hampered by invalidism, but spreading itself freely in many directions, and giving its best very generously and open-handedly.

I think, too, that, just at this time, the story of my sister's work, and of the impress of her character and temperament upon her work, will have a special significance. Women have shown amply in the present war their aptitude and capacity for many employments and activities, and it is clear that they will soon be called to a larger share in the administration of the State, and to a wider as well as a more directly technical sphere of influence. My sister, I believe, is a notable instance of how wide and firm a woman's intellectual grasp may be, if her faculties are properly trained, and of how sound and reasonable a quality her judgment may prove, even when such characteristics are found, as was the case with my sister, with a highly emotional

nature and an intense capacity both for bestowing and inspiring affection. My sister was deeply and essentially feminine in temperament and outlook, and yet I have known no one whose mind was more characterised by the qualities of width, accuracy, solidity, and incisiveness, which we are accustomed to regard as essentially masculine.

After all, the best and only reason for making a record of a life and character is that it should have been of a rich and beautiful quality; and this was conspicuously the case with my sister Maggie. She had a very clear, fresh, and comprehensive mind, with a singular gift of mastering abstruse and difficult subjects; she had a wide range of interests as well, art and archæology and biblical study; moreover she had great and deep affections, and a vivid sympathy with all living creatures, from birds and dogs, which she understood and dealt with as very few people I have known have been able to do, to fellow-workers and fellow-students, and her inner circle of relations and friends. Her friendships were strong and devoted, and she was one too from whom many sought help and inspiration; and something of this deserves to be told.

Moreover, if I compare her with my brother Hugh, I think it is almost impossible to conceive a greater contrast. Hugh was vivid, impatient, instantly attractive, with remarkable gifts of rapid expression and impressive public speech. My sister was profound, deliberate, untiring, slow in execution, thorough, and her charm, which was great, was not easily or lightly revealed. She was shy and retiring in manner, diffident and tentative; apt to consolidate her friendships by long and quiet

companionship ; while Hugh was easily bored, and darted hither and thither like a glancing firefly.

My sister left many letters to friends and relations, some fragmentary diaries, and numerous papers. She was not at her easiest in letters, perhaps—the act of writing was distasteful to her—she preferred talk at all times ; moreover she had so many small enterprises in hand, and was so much away from home, travelling and paying visits in search of health, that her letters are very full of practical details about her various undertakings. Yet for all that there is much of interest and vigour in them, even if they reveal rather than express the drift of her mind and temperament.

But about one thing I have no doubt at all, and that is of the rare distinction and fineness of her mind and spirit. She was not in the least degree or at any time, ordinary. She thought much and anxiously over many problems, and her keen intellect saw very clearly and swiftly into the principles of a subject, while she had a strong grasp of detail, and a wonderfully exact and accurate memory. At the same time this intellectual force did not, as is often the case, tend to draw her away from concrete life. She cared deeply for many people of very different types, and her friendships were not at all mere intellectual partnerships. She got great joy out of her affections, and she suffered greatly through them. Her books, strong and delicate as they are, do not in the least express the fullness of her mind and heart.

I have always believed that there is an immense future before the art of biography. I think that we are at present only in its initial stages, and have

not yet passed much beyond a theory that biographies should only concern themselves with great figures and people of notable performance. I hold rather the opposite view, that the real function of biography is to deal with interesting and striking personalities. Many great doers sacrifice personality to work, and their deeds are their best record. But there are many people among us who live and die practically unknown, so far as the world is concerned, whose handling of life and thought and emotion and relationship is yet exquisitely fine and strong. But because this power expends itself in daily intercourse and talk and friendship, penetrates the lives and hearts of a small circle, it is apt to evaporate in vague stimulus and beautiful memories, and thus to mingle itself with the current of the world. Yet these are very often the people who are best worth recalling and hearing about, because they radiated light and fragrance, and raised the moral and artistic temperature of those with whom they came into contact.

Of course in all friendships and affections there are scenes, words, looks which cannot be made known or described, because what gave them beauty and inspiration was the sense of what lay behind, and could not even then be uttered. But it seems to me both strange and sad when those who have been in contact with a fine nature involve all their recollections alike in a veil of sacredness which cannot be lifted. My own feeling is wholly different. It seems to me to be a sacred duty to reveal what I can of a noble character, which in the bond of affection has interpreted life to many, cast a clear light upon it, shown it to be something large and free. To

show how life can be lived nobly to those who would live more nobly if they could, is one of the best gifts that can be given to the world.

My sister was emphatically one of these chosen spirits. I do not believe that any one who knew her well could help being affected by her, or could possibly forget her; and so I have determined to trace her swift and troubled passage across this earthly scene, and if I can in the least degree succeed in depicting her as she lived, I shall be more than satisfied.

A. C. BENSON.

Magdalene College, Cambridge.
March 31, 1917.

CHAPTER I

CHILDHOOD

As I write these words, there lies before me a somewhat faded photograph, exactly fifty years old, characterised by that strange power, which early photographs have, of imparting a look of haggard age to every face, however young. It is taken in an angle of the North Front of Wellington College. My father, then a young Headmaster of thirty-six, stands in a voluminous and heavily braided frock-coat, clasping a book, like a statue of himself in a public garden. My mother, a sedate matron of twenty-five, in a crinoline and a hat resembling a dish of mayonnaise, holds my elder sister, Nelly, who wears an ample headgear tied with large ribbons under the chin ; my brother Martin and myself, in little jackets and knickerbockers, stand on either side of her, wearing an aspect of deep anxiety. The beloved nurse Beth, then about fifty, has the look of a centenarian ; she holds on her lap a mass of white lace and linen, with a little hand drooping down—my sister Maggie as she then appeared, just a year old. Doubtless a proud and happy group, in spite of the tension of the moment—for exposure was a lengthy business in those days, and the artist grimaced freely ! Yet but two survive—my mother and myself.

My sister Margaret—Maggie as she was always called—was born in 1865, on June 16. The Headmaster's house was then in the North Front of the College, looking down the avenue of rhododendrons and Wellingtonias, towards the lake. The College had been built in 1858, a stately pile, I always think, rather French than English in character, with its two lead-capped flanking towers. It had grown up, like a fairy palace, in a heathery waste sprinkled with self-sown firs, where there was hardly a house in sight. I recollect but little of the old Lodge, except a nursery, with pictures pasted on the walls, which were harmless enough by day, but terrifying as dusk came on, and needing to be propitiated, especially the likeness of an owl, perched on a branch, with large staring wicked eyes, to which endearing epithets were applied. The night-nursery seems to me to have had a large low semi-circular window, with florid metal traceries in front of it, through which the avenue was visible—and behind it, looking into the College Court, there appears to me to have run a great bare corridor, with big windows and boarded floor, containing no furniture, and leading I know not whither, where we played on wet afternoons. Then there was a tiny walled garden, close by which was a high square chimney, with a cornice at the top, which vomited black smoke in a dreadful manner ; and down below, in a corner among shrubs a quite insupportably fearful stone face, of which the body seemed to have been engulfed in the ground. It is natural enough, no doubt, that little but the terrors of the place should be imprinted on my memory.

Maggie was christened, I suppose, on July 20,

St. Margaret's day; because her name had hardly been settled when we arrived at Sandhurst Church. My father was in favour of Bridget, an old family name, but thought to be homely. My mother wished for Agatha, and they had compromised upon Margaret before they met old Mr. Parsons, the clergyman, who told them that it was St. Margaret's day; and the name always seemed to express my sister perfectly, in its sweet gentleness. Her godfather was Bishop Westcott, who gave her a little gold cross, with a single pearl—Margaret means "pearl"—which she wore round her neck with a black velvet ribbon, and the value of which was believed in the nursery to be quite inestimable.

So her life began; and in the same year we moved into the newly-built Master's Lodge, where we lived till Maggie was eight years old, and then went to Lincoln. I remember little of her in those early days. She was a very serene and amiable child, who took her own time about everything, and never fussed. Indeed her deliberateness about getting ready to go out was sometimes felt to be aggravating. We started off all together in a tightly-packed omnibus in 1869 to drive to Reading, *en route* for Whitby. There were five children then, my brother Fred having been born in 1867. My father and mother, Beth and the nursemaid, we five children with innumerable wraps, bags, bottles, satchels, books, packed ourselves in on a sweltering summer morning. It was a great and exciting adventure, and there were innumerable claims about windows and seats to be considered and disallowed. A silence was broken by a little voice coming from where

Maggie sate ensconced, and hardly visible in her corner—" I'm very comfitable, I am ! "

She and my sister Nelly used to play games with their dolls'-house of immense secrecy. They would never say what the adventures they enacted were. I concealed myself behind a curtain in a room where they were allowed to play, in order to penetrate the mystery. A small cradle was produced, and two small imperturbable china dolls were packed into it. Then Nelly said, in a high fluty voice, " How sweet is the affection of these innocent babes ! " The play had begun in earnest, but my laughter betrayed me ; they cried with anger, thrust me out of the room into the passage, and locked the door, so that I had to finish my laughter alone !

In her last illness my sister wrote some little recollections of early days. She speaks with delight of the books that were read to us by my mother in winter evenings such as " Thalaba," " Ivanhoe," and " Phantastes," and even more of the times when my mother, who had a great gift of improvisation, was persuaded to tell us a story " out of her own head." Maggie says that she could not read to herself till she was five years old, and was thought backward ; and that her writing was so bad that it was described as the work of spiders which had fallen into the inkpot, while her figures were supposed to resemble potatoes. She remembered too how she burst into tears of anger over a subtraction sum, and how a looking-glass was fetched to show her how ugly it made her, which offended, she says, her sense of dignity. She says that she was inclined to dissolve into tears over her work, and that in answer to a question from a friend of my mother's as to what

Photo by J. Waller, Whitby.]

MRS. BENSON, NELLIE, MAGGIE, BETH AND FRED.

1869.

[*To face page* 10.

she was reading, she said that it was " a book called ' Reading without Tears, or Tears without Reading ' " —she was not sure which.

She described how she caused amusement by declaiming a poem—

> " The pears and the apples
> Hang *rusty* on the bough "

instead of " russet."

She and my sister used to do a little " preparation " by themselves in the dining-room for half-an-hour before tea,—" but if the butler * came in, we talked to him, and consulted him about our history, and he described what he would do in case there was a revolution."

In the hymn-singing on Sunday afternoons my sister says that she always left out the line " And every virtue we possess " in " Our Blest Redeemer," because she did not think it was right to claim to possess any virtues.

She remembered too how two dolls were given her, one a boy in Scotch costume, who was said by the donor to be " The Marquis of Lorne " : but she and her sister decided that this would not do, and that he must always be called " Harry " in private, for fear he should be too proud ; and further how on one occasion when she had been told to sit quiet in a chair for some misdemeanour, she said, " Ven I get up, I'll vip my doll."

Here are one or two of her earliest letters. The first is a little note written to my mother, who was ill at the time. It is addressed to " Mrs. Benson,"

* John Parker, for many years porter at Lambeth, and a most faithful and valued friend.

and has a funny little stamp, very badly drawn, upon it, with some mystical signs, a star and a crescent and a cross, and "NURSERY POSTAGE—ONE PENY" printed round the edges. It was like Maggie to *write* a letter to express the affection which she was too shy to speak. Indeed, in her childish troubles, she used to go for comfort to my mother, not to confide so much as to get strength from loving contact, put her head down softly on my mother's shoulder and say, "Oh, mamma!" to which the expected reply was "Oh, Maggie!"—and that was enough.

(1870.)

MY DEAR MAMA,

Please come to tea if you are not to tired to-night, please do. Will you if you do please sit on my side if you can.

Your loving little

MAGGIE.

Then comes a little batch of Maggie's letters relating the chronicles of the nursery, all written to my mother who had gone away for a long holiday, to recover from an illness, and was staying with my uncle Christopher Benson at Wiesbaden.

(*To her Mother.*)

Well. Coll.,
June 2 (1872).

MY DEAR MAMA,

I hope you are quite well. We went on the pony yesterday with papa as there is a side-saddle.

Arthur went with us, it was such fun, it *was* so nice, we liked it *so much*, and Aunty took Freddy out, but it *was* so nice on the pony, Nelly slipped down, but *I* did not of cause. Baby has got two teeth is not that nice. I went to reading * the day before yesterday, and Beth bought Nelly a little dolly and me a bird in a cage which when you push down the cage a little squecks a little and opens its mouth, your loveing daughter,

IE
MAGG

(*To her Mother.*)

Well. Coll.,
June 4 (1872).

MY DEAR MAMA,

I hope you are better. We and papa (for papa is not we) went out yesterday we neither fell down, nor slid down the pony, the pony stumble with Nelly, and shyed twice with me. It *was* jolly with the pony. The first time he shyed with me it was at a little pony carriage, and the second time at a noise. *I* did not tumble down either time. I have not gone out in the pony-carriage ever since you went, but *I am* going to-day. Your loveing daughter

MAGGIE.

Even then she was sensitive to little personal impressions; she says in one of those early letters—"Papa came home at nine this morning. Mama we have not heard from Martin. Papa looked disappointed at not [hearing] from Martin."

* Reading.

In the next letter, " Baby " is my brother Hugh, and Granny is my mother's mother, Mrs. Sidgwick. The name of Pigg was that of a worthy tradesman in a neighbouring village. It had appeared to us almost incredibly delightful that anyone should persist in being known by the name. We considered that it must be done out of pure kind-heartedness for other people's amusement. Names indeed are for children very real things, inseparably connected with their owners and with a magical sort of symbolism about them, not merely convenient labels.

(*To her Mother.*)

Wellington College.
(1872.)

My dear Mama,

I hope you are quite well. Baby can walk about quite by himself now. He is *so* joly and amusing. When-ever he sees Granny he begings to try to sing, as Granny always does when she comes to tea. he very often trys to sing a hunting song.

I hope you will come home at or before Christmas, or after. We are going to change our name to Pigg. Martin is going to be call'd Old Pig, and Arthur big Pig and Nelly Dut Pig. And I thin Pig spelt thinne. And Fred Pug Pig because he's so like a monkey, and Baby grig Pig because he's the smallest of us. Nelly is going to be call'd Dut (which means Dutiful) because she whished him to fall into a plool when he was trying to reach her some water lilies was not that *very* kind of her.

They have nearly put on the slates of Crowthron* church.

Baby often pulls himself up by a chair and pushing it before him walks about. We all send our love to you and Aunt Agnes † and uncle Chris.

Your loving dautergher Maggie.

In the summer of 1872 we children went off to Rugby, to stay with my grandmother, Mrs. Sidgwick, at her house in the Bilton Road. In the attic was an old theatrical wardrobe, full of costumes used by my mother and her brothers when they were children. Maggie writes—

Rugby.
(1872.)

MY DEAR MAMA,

I hope you are quite well. We have such fun in the attic, I dressed to be a queen, and Nelly dressed up to be a prince; I had a crown on of course and a white veil over it, and a bracelet on too. Nelly was dressed very grandly too. I had other things on besides the white veil and the crown and much grander than *them*. Granny has got a white cat and its hairs come off very much and it got two little kittens and they were given away before we came but we went to the house of a person to whom Granny had given one of the kittens and we saw it there. And we saw a donkey with its mother. We all send our love to you.

Your loving daughter,
MAGGIE.

* Crowthorne, a hamlet of Sandhurst, now a separate parish, close to Wellington College.

† Mrs. Christopher Benson.

(*Written on the same sheet as previous letter—by Mrs. Sidgwick, to Mrs. Benson.*)

Just a line or two, dearest Minnie, with the dear children's letters. In spite of all the dullness which Rugby summer holidays always bring, and the deserted streets when we go out, they find pleasure and excitement everywhere, and this appears to reach its climax when they get to the attic, whose treasures appear to be inexhaustible, and I know that they will be well amused there, if we should ever have a soaking wet day, which the clouds this afternoon almost portend. I assure you it is quite delightful to me to have these dear children here, and they all met me so lovingly. Weather permitting, I shall take them a drive to-morrow morning, as, *if* the night is dry, we can have croquet in the afternoon. Then there are all the new numbers of Aunt Judy, when they must be in the house. They have all seemed *quite* well to-day, and they have unfailing appetites.

. . . . .

Kindest love to all,
Your loving Mother,
MARY SIDGWICK.

It is characteristic of Maggie's early sense of responsibility that with this last letter is enclosed a letter of my eldest brother s about our acting. Maggie has written a severe little comment on the top, "An old letter not sent by Martin when he ought." This was Martin's letter—

(1872.)

MY DEAR MAMMA,

I hope you are quite well. Our theatricals went off with a great deal of éclat and we are going to have some more. It is going to be "The Hunchback" and I am to be the Barrister. At this present time I am in a fever of excitement about the Peruvian Indians as I have been reading a book called "Manu the Peruvian Chief." It is all about the Incas and the Children of the Sun and of the hanging gardens which they built for miles along the Andes and of Cuzco. This is one of the pictures.

Farewell,

M. W. B.

The next letter is from Wellington College; my father had gone to Lincoln to be installed as Chancellor and Canon Residentiary.

Well. Coll.,
Dec. 29 (1872).

MY DEAR MAMA,

I hope you are quite well. Baby can walk so nicely now instead of Beth leaving him to push about a chair alone she leaves him to walk about alone is not that nice. You will only have one more sunday after this and then you will come home again. I am quite tired of your going away so often it is so tiresome is not it. I and Nelly have not gone to Lincoln to see papa made Chancellor because we had colds so Martin and Arthur will have to tell us all about it. Papa has sent Nelly a photograph of our house at Lincoln. I like the look of it very much but I don't like going away

very much—papa has told us such a great deal about our house (at Lincoln) and the garden and papa says that there are two old ruined towers and a piece of the old city wall in the garden is not that nice. I wish you a happy new year. We have not got that box which you sent us. Is not it a pity that we are not all together this last Christmas and New Year. The boys are gone to Lincoln though we did not for they had not colds. I send my love to you. Your loving daughter

MAGGIE.

CHAPTER II

LINCOLN

All this time Maggie's closest companion was Nelly, my elder sister, who was born in 1863. They were very different in temperament. Nelly was a quick, active, resourceful and adventurous girl, fond of games, sociable, naturally inclined to take the lead, and indeed to carry the war into the enemy's country if necessary. She was indeed inclined to rush in impulsively where fools feared to tread.

We settled in at the Chancery in 1873. It was a picturesque rambling house of great extent, and of very various dates, with endless corridors, lobbies, staircases, odd attics and deserted outbuildings. The nursery was a big room at the top of the house ; my sisters occupied a bedroom which was approached on one side by a spiral stone staircase from the hall, which passed by a little oratory over the entrance-porch, and came up into a little row of quaint rooms looking out on Minster Yard. These could also be approached by a wonderful passage from the nursery, contrived by my father across some leads. The schoolroom was the ancient chapel, with a bit of the fifteenth-century screen embodied in the wall. There was also a large walled-garden, with a mound covered with elders,

two towers of the ancient city wall in the corners, a bit of lawn, many fruit-trees and vegetable-beds.

There never was so delicious a house for children, and the games we played in the deserted stables and lofts, as well as in the garden-towers were endlessly exciting and romantic.

When we went to Lincoln, Maggie was eight; she and my sister attended a school in an old panelled house in Minster Yard. Maggie was in those days a tall slim child, who kept her thoughts much to herself, but was always ready to have plans and secrets. She was, I think, rather my special ally. We began a magazine there, and I remember that Maggie's stories, written in a large straggling hand, in which catastrophe followed catastrophe, all most concisely told, and ending almost as soon as they began, were not considered quite up to the family standard, and the same applied to her early sketches. She always insisted on signing her stories "Mr. Pooley"—the name of a venerable Prebendary, which seemed to us for some reason the height of absurdity. "Don't you think it is rather *silly*, always to sign your stories 'Mr. Pooley,' Maggie?" "I think I shall go on doing it," said Maggie, and she did.

At Lincoln there occurred a curious instance of Maggie's sensitive and almost morbid sense of responsibility. She was walking with my sister in the streets near the Minster, and saw a child put a half-penny with which it was playing into its mouth. In the nursery all copper coins were supposed to be dangerous to life if placed for an instant in the mouth. This was part of the care which our dear old nurse took of us. Beth, as she

was called, always removed the little purple beans from French beans, leaving only the green pod, for some obscure reason of health ; she hunted out of ginger-beer the tiniest fragments of cork—they were supposed to " swell up inside you." She never allowed us to pick up things on our walks for fear we should " catch something." Copper coins were supposed to produce " verdigris," which was sure to be instantly fatal.

Maggie saw the child put the half-penny in its mouth and was too shy to interfere, or to tell anyone, but agonised over it in secret. A little later a man was condemned to death at the Assizes for the murder of a child in Lincoln. Maggie became sure that it was the child she had seen, who had died of verdigris, and that the criminal had been falsely suspected of the murder. At last the strain became too great, and she told the whole story to my mother, who was able to comfort her. But the incident shows what a childish imagination is capable of ; and Maggie's power of multiplying the significance of life by her imagination, and suffering deep distress from a sense that she ought to have acted, was characteristic of her all her life long.

There are a few of her Lincoln recollections written down during her illness, in which her extraordinary memory comes out. All the children of the different Canons living in the Close are duly recorded by their Christian names. It was a happy time, full of little sociabilities, games and picnics. Maggie records our visits to the central tower of the Minster to hear and see " Great Tom " strike the hour, and the awful pause after the clashing of the small chimes when the wires attached to the

hammer of the great bell began to strain and quiver ; and she remembered too how from some airy gallery she looked down and saw the Dean in his garden admiring his geraniums.

She describes how she and my sister went to spend the afternoon with an old lady in the Close, and played cards for counters, which at the end were exchanged for money. They came away with sixpence in coppers between them, horrified at the wickedness of having won money at cards, but far too shy to refuse to take it. They finally decided that they would put it all into the offertory, and so purge their guilt.

I have two tiny recollections of her at this time. One was when I went with her and my elder sister to an evening children's party. We were late, and were shown into a room where a kindly governess was dispensing tea ; but all the other guests had finished, and departed to games. We were given tea and cake, and then the awful solemnity and politeness of the whole thing dawned upon us ; I saw my elder sister crimson suddenly, and then begin to laugh ; I joined in, to the consternation and discomfiture of the governess ; when we had at last conquered our hysterics, which had been accompanied all the time, quite sincerely, by a deep sense of rudeness and shame, Maggie took her turn, and laughed longer and louder and more helplessly than either of us. We got away somehow, and had a very earnest conversation on our return about our own discourtesy. " If only I *could* have explained to Miss D——," I remember Nelly saying, " that I wasn't laughing at her ! "

Again I remember how Maggie and I walked over

Photo by R. Slingsby, Lincoln.]

NELLIE.
Aged 13.

MAGGIE.
Aged 11.

1876. At Lincoln.

[*To face page 22.*

to Riseholme, the Bishop's palace, where there was a big lake, on a summer's day, to fish. We were allowed to use the boat, and we floated about all day in the blazing sun, over the clear shallow lake, looking down into translucent spaces of sun-warmed water, where big pike lay basking and asleep, and wide tracts of matted weed. We landed on the island for our lunch, secured an abandoned and very malodorous swan's egg from a deserted nest, and fished at intervals in vain. About five o'clock we gave it up, and were going off with our empty basket, when the old gardener came down to feed the ducks, and condoled with us on our ill-success. He threw a quantity of food into the shallow water by the edge of the bank, and the ducks churned it all into mud and foam. He then departed, when Maggie pointed out to me curious swirls and eddies in the muddy water, and said she thought they were fish. We hastily put our rods together, and in ten minutes we caught half-a-dozen really big roach, the greater number falling to her rod. Oh, the delicious triumph of that moment! We walked home in the dusk, tired and hot, but in the seventh heaven of delight at our good fortune; and I can still remember my father's gallant attempt the next morning to swallow some fragments of the very muddy-flavoured fish, while Maggie and I worked through our shares, and as the old books say "pronounced them excellent."

She was then, as always, a good *comrade*, good-natured, ungrumbling, willing to fall in enthusiastically with any plan.

My elder brother and myself got scholarships at Winchester and Eton respectively in 1874. I was the first to arrive at home, and we arranged a

pageant to welcome my brother on his arrival, in which I remember that Nelly and Maggie, arrayed in College caps and old gowns of my father's, represented the respective Headmasters of Eton and Winchester. We met my brother at our front door, and conducted him, bewildered but gratified, in procession to the drawing-room.

I can find no letters of hers at this time ; we were all together, well and happy ; strangely enough, in the last year of her life she reminded me that in one of my school-terms, I did not answer her letters, and she consulted my mother as to what she should do. " If he won't write to you," said my mother cheerfully " don't write to him ! "—and she told me then that though this had happened forty years before, she was always remorseful that she had taken the advice.

She was then at this time a silent shy girl, afraid of publicity, often feeling awkward, easily abashed, lacking in initiative, with little hopes and fancies and ambitions, which she could not express either in deed or word, and though interested in her school work, glad to be at home again among familiar and trusted surroundings ; modest and quiet, but with her own way of doing things, and her own quiet opinion about all matters in which she was concerned.

Lis Escop, Truro.
1879.

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CHAPTER III

TRURO

At the end of 1876, Maggie being then eleven, my father was offered the newly-formed See of Truro. An income was provided, but no house. Eventually the Vicarage of the extensive and formerly wealthy parish of Kenwyn adjacent to Truro was obtained for the See. It was really more like a small country house than a Vicarage. Its glebe of some fifteen acres was planted like a little park, and the house stood in a stately way, a compact stone Georgian mansion, with pleasant gardens behind. It was a very lovely place ; it looked down upon the town of Truro, with the smoke going up above the clustered roofs, spanned by the two extremely picturesque timber viaducts of the Great Western Railway. Beyond the town the estuary lay, a shining water among low green wooded heights. To the East the quiet valley of Idless ran far into the hills, with its clear rippling streams, little stony tracks coming down from upland farms, bits of waste and wild woodland.

We settled there in 1877, and the home life was vivid and happy. My father used to go off on Confirmation tours, but he kept the holidays free both from engagements and also from visitors, and

we mainly depended upon ourselves for companionship.

The settling in was a time of delicious excitement for us all. My father had hitherto taken very little part in public affairs, and the sense of grandeur that he should be made a Bishop sent an agreeable ripple through the family life. I find a letter written by my sister Nelly to her godmother, Miss Wickenden, on the subject, which gives a lively picture of our feelings.

The Chancery, Lincoln,
1876.

. . . . . .

We have had such fun reading the reports of papa in the newspaper, one says he is " a stout and hearty-looking man of the medium height," another " that he has a thin intellectual looking face, and is above the middle height by a good deal "—another that " he is the very model of a handsome Englishman ! " Another that " his desire for the good of the masses and his mixing among the working-classes were qualities equally shared by Mrs. Benson ! " Good-bye now.

Yours affectionately,
M. E. BENSON.

A High School for Girls was one of the first things my father established at Truro ; he was always a strong supporter of all movements for the education of women. Nelly and Maggie began to attend the High School at once, under the careful and sympathetic supervision of Miss Key, the first headmistress. Here is a letter of Maggie's about the new interests.

TRURO

(*To her Mother.*)

Kenwyn, Truro.
(1877.)

. . . . .

We went a walk with Papa yesterday and went down and saw the cathedral. We met Mr. Hardy in the town and he came and brought the great brown dog of Mrs. Gardiner's, and consequently Watch * growled most of the way and they had one or two quarrels over a stick.

. . . . .

Mummy † has laid three more eggs. I think I shall change her name to Buttercup. Thersis † still sits all day long on nothing and pecks my fingers if I stroke her.

. . . . .

Nellie has got a perfect mania on for literature. Miss Key talked to her about Johnstone ‡ on Wednesday after Algebra till she was perfectly wild about him.

Maggie was always devoted to animals, and the various pets became a matter of deep concern. There was a friendly goat, who used to accompany us on our walks, under the vigilant charge of Watch, who shepherded her, and kept her from loitering. A great dynasty of guinea-pigs was established, with the strangest names, Atahualpa, Mr. and Mrs. Fenwick, Edith Mitchinson (a Lincoln school-friend) and many others. The one advantage of the guinea-pig as a pet is that it forms and conciliates no

* The family collie. † Canaries. ‡ Dr. Johnson.

personal attachments, so that its loss or death can evoke no deep emotion. Here is a letter of Maggie's on the guinea-pig question.

(*To her Mother.*)

Kenwyn, Truro.

. . . . . .

Edith Mitchinson has had 3 more.

. . . . .

I shall call these guinea-pigs Lady Victoria, Lady Blanche, and Lady Edith. If any of them turn out to be males I shall call them Lord Victoria, etc.

. . . . . .

But from this time Maggie's friendships with her school friends became a serious concern in her life. Miss Maud Furniss, who was with her at school in Truro, says that if you were a friend of hers, you were bound to be intimate. "Her friends were a part of herself; she cared as much about their interests as about her own." She adds, "I got into the habit, when I was walking alone, of talking to her and telling her things, as if she were there, and pointing out beautiful things to her"; and she sends me an interesting little story of the school-days, which shows that Maggie, for all her shyness and sensitiveness, was capable of taking a line of her own.

"There is one incident that I have always remembered from the Truro days. It is characteristic of Maggie. I had been given a bad-conduct mark for flicking my pen at another girl—and her

pinafore got inked in consequence. I was very angry—and so were my friends, and a petition was handed to Miss Key asking her to take off the mark. I believe every girl in the school—except Maggie—signed it—everyone of any age, that is. I forget now her reasons, but I know I didn't feel any resentment, for it seemed somehow natural. She thought the mark was justified—and I think the rest of us didn't consider it on its own merits at all."

My mother writes—

"Maggie's relation to younger girls was very delightful, it was not so much motherly as elder-sisterly—and the little girls adored her. One day at Kenwyn, I heard Maggie playing on the piano in the School Room. This being unusual, I looked in. A little girl was lying on the sofa in wild weeping. Maggie told me afterwards that the tears were in consequence of a sudden fear the little girl had had that Maggie would go to College, that she should never see her again, and that Maggie would forget all about her—quite a 'Clever Alice!'—and Maggie thought the piano might be useful to tranquillise the child."

Mrs. Shirley (*née* Tweedy) writes—

. . . . .

"Maggie did everything for me in my early days and was my ideal for all my early girlhood. She helped me out of all my scrapes, and with infinite tact and understanding made me see the beauty of goodness and religion, when before it had all seemed to me a dreary duty. I think it was her

keen and delightful sense of humour which made her attractive to so many. When I think of her now, as I often do, I always see that wonderful smile that began in her eyes and ended in that characteristic turn of the mouth."

Another school friend of hers, Angela Symons, now Mrs. Shuttleworth, writes—

"My recollections of your sister are mostly connected with the old Truro days; it was a very happy time, and Maggie had much to do with that happiness. Indeed, as I look back, I see how her figure stands out in an atmosphere almost entirely connected with laughter and gladness, and the general *fun* of things that belong to youth.

"But personal sayings and reminiscences in which she played a *principal* part are not many, and in saying that I give the strongest evidence of what I feel most about her character—its simplicity and its reserve.

"I think, considering how clever she was, and how surrounded she was by an atmosphere of *educated* brains, it is the more astonishing that she never by word or deed made one feel the least bit small, or even at a disadvantage. On the contrary, I can recall one little incident, when she made one's very foolishness seem cleverness! That was largely due to her delicious and never-failing sense of humour.

"It was in class at Strangways Terrace. We had been given a new and, as I thought, very objectionable kind of exercise in arithmetic to do at home. I never had any gift for 'sums,' but considered myself *rather* clever at having worked out a very

long one which ran into millions in the answer. I was the first to read out the result, and did so triumphantly. Miss Key, without turning a hair, then asked Maggie, who was next to me, for *her* solution. It was 1, and it was right! There was much merriment, of course, and I was saved any distress by Maggie's delight at the *fun* of it. Her desire to know how I arrived at such vast figures, where she had merely achieved 1—partook of the nature of a compliment, and made me ultimately feel that I had been more successful than she! I can see her now quite plainly as she was on that day, wearing a speckly bluey-green cotton frock, without much waist-line (she always said I had too much), her hair tightly brushed back, and shining, a silver cross and chain around her neck, and I can *hear* her laughter coming in little gurgles of delight, and her quiet gentle voice, with its suspicion of breathlessness, and the *r's* that would not roll! She was so incapable of anything mean, even in her thoughts, that she drew out quite unconsciously the better side of the girls. The light was so strong that there could be no dark places.

"I can remember only one thing she actually *said*. We were arguing about Browning and Longfellow! She made great fun of Longfellow, and asked me to explain what sense there was in speaking of 'Footprints on the sands of time,' since the next tide would wash them out?"

My mother adds—

"In the Truro days, Maggie was already a great lover of Browning—so was I, but I often had to

go to her on difficult passages—her mind was so subtle, and she never failed to convince me."

Miss Maud Furniss writes—

"Maggie was always very keen on people doing things *together*. She believed in the virtue of 'Societies.' I remember in the early days at school she formed an 'Anti-Slang' Society. We wore badges with the motto 'Manners Maketh Man.' I don't think the Society lived very long—and I don't remember that it achieved much. Perhaps that was because, at the same time, Nelly formed a 'Slang' Society, the members of which had to say 'awfully' or some other slang word so many times a day. But this social sense of masses entered into more serious questions later—I remember once, a great many years after, in London, that I was just going down to some friends at Bisham for a week-end, and I had fixed to go by a train that would get me there in time for luncheon. I had at that time given up going to Church—we had been talking, and I remember I said I could not see that 'worship' implied going to Church; Maggie insisted on the good of doing things *with* other people, and said 'You see, Maud, you *are* going down to be in time to have luncheon with the others.'

"Maggie always wanted to know her friend's friends—she also wanted all her friends to know one another. She always wrote of them by their Christian names and often sent on their letters—this wasn't any breach of confidence—and she said once I remember, that what mattered was *knowing* that other people knew about oneself, not the mere

fact of their knowing. That might be a dangerous principle unless the person who held it was wise and careful—and Maggie never told me anything her friends would have wished not known, but only what made me realise them more and better."

Here are bits of letters about her doings :—

(*To her Mother.*)

Kenwyn, Truro.
(1880 or 1881.)

. . . . .

Agnes and I went to Miss Key's At Home on Monday. On our way back we got into heroics again, viz., the ideal of a hero. Her ideal is someone with a manly stride and a flash in his eye, and a quick temper, etc. I think it is going to rain. Hurrah ! they won't have cricket at school.

. . . . .

The next is a little satire on one of her friends who was fond of using inverted commas and of underlining quite unemphatic words :—

(*To her Mother.*)

Lis Escop, Truro.

DEAREST "MOTHER,"

Everything is " allright " here. I hope this is the *right* thing to do about your " letters " but I " know " I'm " bound " as Maclean* says to *do* something " wrong."

Isn't *this* " like Alice W—— " I don't know how to " spell " that.

Your *most* loving " daughter,"

M. " Benson."

* The coachman.

It was now that she formed a close companionship with my brother Fred, which lasted to the end. They often travelled together in later days, and though very different in temperament had a mutual understanding which no divergence of view could disturb. My brother Fred writes—

"When we were quite small we used to tell each other endless stories of exciting adventure which was to happen to us. She and I and Watch were the actors in these. There were great explorations, deadly perils at the claws of wild beasts and always discoveries of treasures, large diamonds and so forth."

. . . . .

In a little book, "Six Common Things," my brother wrote in full detail the account of one of their adventures. The story reproduces so closely and vividly the atmosphere of the Truro days that I quote it here—

"The next great joy was the aquarium. Measured by the limitations of actual space and cubic contents, the capacities of the aquarium were not large, for it was only a brown earthenware bowl with a diameter of about eighteen inches; but its potentialities were infinite. We had even dim ideas of rearing a salmon parr in it.

"The happy hunting-ground, from which the treasures of the aquarium were drawn, was a little stream that ran swiftly over gravelly soil about half-a-mile from our house. On each side of it stretched low-lying water meadows, rich with ragwort and meadow-sweet, among which one day we found a lark's nest. Every now and then the stream

spread out into shallow tranquil pools, overhung by thick angular hawthorns. Sticklebacks made their nests under the banks ; small trout flashed through the clear shallows, and the caddis-worms collected the small twigs which fell from the trees, and made of them the rafters of their houses.

" It was by such pools as these that we spent hours dabbling in the stream and filling small tin cans with water-snails and caddises, for subsequent transference to the aquarium . . . and here one evening we caught a stickleback. It was my sister's doing, but I considered then, and consider still, that the credit was as much mine as hers.

" It was this way : she had been poking our net as usual among the *débris* that lay in the backwater of the pool, and had found four caddises and two water-snails, one of which was a new sort. She had just said, ' That's all,' and was preparing to throw the rest back into the stream, when I saw something move at the bottom of the net, and there among the dead leaves and twigs lay a live stickleback. That night, the aquarium, which usually lived in an empty coach-house, was moved solemnly up to the nursery. The idea of Gray's cat and the gold-fish was too strong for us : besides, if the cat did get at our stickleback, the aquarium would not be deep enough to drown it ; and in any case the nervous shock to the stickleback might be fatal.

. . . . .

" The aquarium was paved with pieces of spar which we had picked up at Torquay the year before, and bright smooth sea-pebbles. I am afraid the caddises would have preferred a little wholesome mud, but that was not to be thought of. Round

the edge crept the water-snails, and the caddis-worms hid among the spar and pebbles, and walked over each other, with a fine disregard of the laws of politeness. But the king of our water-world was the stickleback : it is a very common fish, but to us there was only one, and that one was ours.

" Every other day the aquarium used to be emptied out and fresh water was put in. This operation required some delicacy of handling. The water was strained through a very narrow piece of netting into the little drain outside the coach-house. Snails, caddis-worms, and stickleback were caught in the netting, and instantly placed in a temporary hotel, in the shape of an old washing-basin, filled with water.

. . . . .

" It was during one of these cleanings out that the great catastrophe happened. The stickleback, according to custom, was swimming fiercely and defiantly round the sinking water in the aquarium. He would always do this till there was scarcely any left, then make a sudden rush against the netting and try to swim through it, a feat which he never accomplished, but which he never perceived was impossible. How it happened I do not quite know ; something caused me to let the water out less discreetly than usual ; the last pint came with a sudden rush, and my sister, who was holding the netting, dropped one corner of it. At this moment the stickleback charged, and for once passed the netting, and the next moment the flow of water had carried him down the drain.

" For a space we sat silent, and then my sister said, with a curious tone in her voice which I had

never heard before, but which I now associate with other griefs which we have been through together, ' It is gone.'

" We silently placed the netting with the caddis-worms and water-snails in the basin, and extracted the tadpoles from the spar. We had not got the heart to arrange and clean out the aquarium, and it lay there empty, with the spar and pebbles scattered over the cobbled yard.

" Later in the morning we came back again, and arranged it as usual. As our heads were bent together over it, while we placed the pebbles at the bottom, I saw two large tears roll from her eyes on to the red earthenware rim of the bowl, and when we had finished, we both looked at the little drain-hole where the stickleback had vanished, and our eyes met. We had not spoken about it since she said ' It is gone.'

" ' I am so sorry,' she whispered, ' oh, why did I let go of the net ? ' and another tear ran down her cheek.

" ' Don't mind so much,' I said, ' it was more my fault than yours. Something jogged my elbow.'

" But we never caught another stickleback."

All this time Maggie's mind was slowly maturing ; but she was still very diffident, and averse to putting herself forward in any way. It is a strange and disconcerting factor in the young—and particularly perhaps in those of more than usual thoughtfulness and originality—that they cannot get relief, they cannot expose the process of their thoughts, much less the thought itself, of which they are half-proud

and half-afraid. There was a strong religious impulse running through the Truro life. My father had arrived upon the scene, among those quick-thinking, sensitive Cornish folk, not long after a great mission at Lincoln, with a deep consciousness of spiritual forces, and a desire to give them more natural and simple expression than had hitherto been possible. As a schoolmaster, though he spoke out his hopes and thoughts plainly and emphatically enough in sermons, he had practised reticence about talking directly on spiritual matters. But at the time of the mission he had come across a different type of religion, something more outspoken and frank, and the friendship which he formed at Truro with G. H. Wilkinson, who was afterwards to succeed him as Bishop, revealed to him that religious things could be spoken of in ordinary social life without affectation or incongruity. The result of this was that he was at once acclaimed in Cornwall as a "converted man." The young clergy too, whom he brought with him, Arthur Mason, John Reeve, G. H. Whitaker, F. E. Carter, G. H. S. Walpole, and others, were all full of enthusiasm and eagerness, so that Wilkinson said later that the life of those early Truro years was more like primitive Christianity, like scenes from the Acts of the Apostles, than anything else he had ever seen. And in the background was the delightful Cornish mind, so welcoming and responsive, restless as a bird. "I can make them laugh, I can make them cry," as an eloquent Parliamentary canvasser said, "I can't make them vote." My father used to say that the Cornishman whom you met in the road expected a smile, a word about the weather, a word about God. But my father

never gained the natural Evangelical accent of religion—and I am glad in one way that though he could and did talk, eagerly and deeply, about religion, when he was moved, we did not as children grow accustomed to the constant urging of religious motives. Religion was close at hand and all about us ; but it did not flow into common talk.

Maggie learned in those days a great love of religious observance ; later on, when she was travelling about the world, many of her letters contain the expression of her dislike of the neglect of Sunday, and the making it into an ordinary day, while throughout her long sad illness she always observed it scrupulously. My father was obviously happiest on Sundays—a peculiar brightness radiated from him. He put all his secular work aside, and he liked a certain quiet tone of talk. We went to two or even three services ; there were prayers as well in the chapel, Bible-reading, and a slow family stroll, during which my father often read aloud and discussed a poem of George Herbert's. Some of the younger clergy generally came in to supper on that day, and the talk was free and mirthful, with a peculiar quality which I have never heard in any other place. It sounds dull to call it ecclesiastical ; but it centred, unaffectedly and appropriately, about ecclesiastical things, and was intensely stimulating from its eagerness and gaiety and spontaneity. I did not realise at the time how unusual it was or how vivid. But all the circle were of one mind, though differing much in temperament. Arthur Mason's talk was radiant with quaint and delicious humour, and his clear soft vigorous laughter was very infectious. John Reeve was full of pleasant

extravagance and ecstasy; but my father in his quickness, his allusiveness, his humorous exaggeration, his emphasis, was the undoubted leader and arbiter of it all.

In all this we children had our full share. We were encouraged to take part. It was a quiet life in a way; we did not see much of other households. But there were plenty of pleasant excursions, into remote woodlands, or to the beautiful Cornish coast, with its crag-pinnacles and rock-arches, and the Atlantic waves marching in, visits to solitary churches, or old houses hidden among secluded valleys. We had too our own games, societies, mysterious observances, acting, a holiday magazine, sketching—a life full of happy and generous stimulus, with much that was serious and thoughtful in the background, not unduly emphasised. The result was that we all grew up in our own way, neither starved in mind, nor fussed over, nor closely directed.

In 1878 came the first great sorrow, the death of my eldest brother, Martin, a boy of extraordinary power and promise, then at Winchester. It was a terrible shock to my father, and it was impossible not to be aware of the ravages of his grief; but for all that it drew us closely together: it was unhappily clear that my brother's death was in part due to precocious mental development; and it gave my father a horror of any sort of pressure, and a tender desire to subordinate everything to our free happiness, which I think bore much fruit in our lives.

The years passed on swiftly, and Hugh, as he grew older, petulant, wilful, full of originality, fitful, independent, began to take his own place. My sisters used to do some work with him, and it was

no sinecure! Here is a scrap of the period about his doings—

(*From M. E. Benson to A. C. Benson.*)

Lis Escop, Truro,
July 10, 1881.

. . . . .

Hugh has a frightful craze for inventing murderous instruments. He has invented one guillotine and two guns. Opposite one of the guns is written "Certain Death if fired." He has extracted a promise from Mamma that if he can make a gun which answers this description, he may fire at anybody and anything he likes. I don't think he found much difficulty in having his request granted. He says it is the simplest thing in the world to make his gun. It consists chiefly of leaden pipes and brass screws.

. . . . .

Here again is a letter of Maggie's giving a glimpse of home doings and responsibilities—

(*To her Mother.*)

(1882.)

My dearest Mother,

Papa came home all right last night, only the train was nearly an hour late, and he was not home till nearly 9.30, so I did not go to bed till past 10.15.

Miss Bramston came up yesterday, did you ask her after all to come up every day? She always does and she is awfully kind.

Papa had 25 letters waiting for him when he came home yesterday—his letters average I think 12½ about.

I quite forgot that I should have to play the hymn at prayers until Papa asked me when we were going to the Chapel what hymn I could play. It altogether went out of my head that it was Whitsunday, so I played "O God of Hosts, the Mighty Lord," wasn't it appropriate? Then I didn't know how to manage the stops so I pulled out Open Diapason and Dulciana and stuck to them all through. However to my comfort Papa told me afterwards that I had played it all right.

Papa said something about my presiding at dinner to-morrow! I half thought then that he was in joke but I am not at all sure, I must ask him! ! ! ! ! Papa thought you might perhaps hear of a cook at Clevedon, he told me to ask you to look out for one.

Best love to Hugh,

Your most loving daughter,

M. BENSON.

Papa is very well I think (only a little tired), and so am I.

The end of the Truro time came with a great unexpectedness. Archbishop Tait had shortly before paid us a visit. His majestic appearance, the slowness of his movements, his kindly dignity, made a deep impression on the younger members of the family. He was received more like a prince than a prelate. He made firm friends with my father, though their ecclesiastical views were very different.

Photo by Fredk. Argall, Truro.]

STAFFA. WATCH.

MAGGIE AT TRURO.
1882. Aged 17.

[*To face page 42.*

When he died, in November 1882, Bishop Harold Browne of Winchester was thought too old and infirm to succeed him. Dean Church was sounded as to his willingness to accept the Archbishopric, but more perhaps as a recognition of his wisdom, and the beauty of his character. He gave a decisive reply, and about Christmas-time my father was offered the post. He called us children into his study, and with great gravity and a noticeable pallor, told us what had happened. It was soon accepted, and early in 1883 the move was made.

CHAPTER IV

LADY MARGARET HALL

In 1883 Maggie was eighteen. Nelly had been already for two years at Lady Margaret Hall at Oxford, under Miss Wordsworth, where she had read Mathematics and English Literature. It was felt that one of the daughters was now wanted at home to help in the constant hospitalities and intricate life of Lambeth and Addington.

Accordingly Nelly was recalled from Oxford, where her health had not been good, and Maggie took her place there.

She writes from Cornwall, where she had gone to the seaside with a party of friends, about her future studies at Oxford.

Prospect House, Newquay.
(1883.)

My dearest Mother,

You don't know what it was to get that letter from you; it seemed somehow to take possession of me altogether, and I thought of you until I quite felt you near that night.

I will write to you when I have talked to Miss Key again. I really don't know enough what it would involve at present. I should certainly like

Photo by Fredk. Argall, Truro.]

MAGGIE.

Aged about 17. [*To face page 44.*

to take up Logic and Pol. Econ. Heaps and heaps better than anything else—another thing about my lessons—Miss Key wants me to leave off French and German this term and do only Mathematics and Latin. May I, if I happen to squeeze through that old Prelim., which isn't very likely, I am afraid ?

We are having such fun here, and are behaving in a perfectly wild way in some things. Nobody is in time for anything ; it is awfully nice for a change, and Miss Bramston and Miss Hedley are frightfully forbearing and never bother about anything.

I am getting to like A——.B—— *awfully*—but I am not quite sure whether you would ; I think you couldn't help it if you knew her really. I know Nellie would hate her.

My darling Mother, I am afraid I altogether fail to see the simplification that would ensue on your death. What DO you mean ? I can't see one atom of meaning of any sort or kind, true or untrue in it.

I wish I could come up to London for a few days. O Mother, DO come down here just for a bit. Wouldn't it do you good ? it would set you up for the rest of the season I know. Can't you come for a little bit ? How *scrumptious* it will be to have Nellie down here ! When will she come ? It will be d'licious.

Do you know what we are going to to-night ? A phrenologist's lecture, in which, among others, a diagram of Papa's head will be exhibited and lectured on. Won't it be a joke ? I will tell you what qualities good and bad he has got. The day is just clearing up, at which everybody is groaning. For the last hour we have been sitting round the table writing notes to each other and letters to other

people. I am in correspondence with A—— at present.

Some of the girls are going to bathe this morning. I am not.

Your lovingest child,
MARGARET BENSON.

Up till now she had been a tall, slim, quiet girl, keeping her thoughts much to herself, diffident in action and speech, always ready to sympathise if called upon, and affectionate, but with somewhat solitary interests. Indeed, Nelly said of her at this time a little impatiently that if Maggie would only have an intimate relationship even with a *cat*, it would be a relief. Maggie, however, went her own way with a considerable fund of steady perseverance. For instance, it was then that her artistic powers had gone slowly ahead of my sister Nelly's, and her sketching in water-colour came to have much beauty and distinction. But her gifts were not facile or showy at any time. Now, however, with the stimulus of higher work and kindred companionship, her powers rapidly matured.

At Oxford, she took up political economy and moral science, and found that she could grasp and master intricate and abstruse subjects with serene ease. Moreover her friendships, which had been hitherto gentle and secret devotions, now became a main interest in her life. She had a great power of idealisation, too great perhaps for her happiness, and found herself irresistibly drawn to many of her companions. She discovered that she could hold her own in talk and discussion with quickness and readiness, could see a point and express it, and

Photo by W. Stackemann & Co., Teddington.]

LADY MARGARET HALL, OXFORD.
(The Old Hall.)

[*To face page 47.*

even demolish an opponent by a gentle and luminous irony. It was thus a time of extraordinary happiness for her, a happiness which overflowed into all she said or wrote.

It is wonderful to me to read the testimonies I have received from many of her College friends, and to realise how the life of the little society gradually centred round her. Her charm consisted in her perfect simplicity; she accepted her companions on their own merits, just as they chose to show themselves to her; she did not desire to be popular or distinguished, nor did she choose her friends on these grounds; she just wished to love and to be loved, and no appeal to her affections was ever made in vain; at the same time she was in her quiet way vivacious, full of interest in innumerable problems, fond of discussion, and both clear and discriminating in argument. She was deeply emotional, but thoroughly disliked mere sentiment. Her friendships were seldom merely irrational admirations, but intelligent and critical companionships.

Miss Bartlett says—

"Her whole attitude of mind and endless sympathy gave interest and charm to her conversation on the simplest subjects, and made the discussion of more difficult ones intelligible and inspiring. She was so wonderfully quick in grasping other people's mental difficulties, and so clear and convincing in explaining them, whether in private conversation or at lectures and classes.

"I remember how a friend once said to her that she 'put soul even into Political Economy,' and

Maggie replied, 'There is soul in it already.' That saying seems to sum up what she was in herself and to her friends better than anything else one could say."

Mrs. Courtney writes—

"What I most vividly remember about Maggie was her genius for friendship. She had the most intense interest in other people's personalities and points of view. We often took walks together, and our conversation turned nearly always on problems of life and character, as illustrated by our contemporaries and our 'authorities.'

"One little incident stands out clearly in my memory. In our last term there together, my first summer term, we were walking one lovely evening in the parks, and I said something about the loveliness of Oxford in June and how it made all life a joy. Maggie pressed me with questions as to why I so enjoyed it all, and I said I didn't know, I just felt like that. Whereupon she said, 'I don't understand your being contented just to enjoy. I always want to know *why* I enjoy.' It was a saying intensely characteristic of her introspective, analytic habit of mind, and I never forgot it."

Miss Beatrice Layman writes—

"At Lady Margaret Hall, Maggie was the life of all the Societies, serious and frivolous, of the Shakespeare and Browning Reading Circles, of the Sunodos, which was an informal debating society. She was a reluctant member of the M.A.S. or Mutual Admiration Society, which consisted of a few of

B. M. Berkley. C. R. Bartlett.
D. E. W. Wood. B. M. Layman.

Photo by F. M. Sutcliffe, Whitby.] C. M. Rivington I. Nichols. Maggie.

Reading Party, 1886. [*To face page* 49.

those more exclusively attached to one another, and Maggie used to say in a complaining voice, 'Can't I be allowed to make a new friend?' She could not be induced to become a member of the Society for the Cultivation of Graceful Leisure, as its rules were too stringent—but she was extraordinarily keen about all sorts of games, such as cricket, and hockey on the tennis lawn. She was Stage Manager of our amateur theatricals—was inimitable as Mrs. Gruffanuff and made a splendid Romeo. She enjoyed ridiculous games, in which we likened one another to flowers and animals, and she entered with zest into 'Storming the Passages' and other entertainments so violent that we were reported to the authorities, but we always felt quite comfortable as long as Maggie was amongst us; while she gave an added 'respectability' when we had to get permission from the Council for such new and at the time 'unfeminine' things as Boating and Hockey. She was indefatigable in trying to learn to swim in order to qualify for the Boating test.

"The photograph I send was taken on a so-called Reading Party—and I think it is an abiding reminder of the value we placed on Maggie's company, as in order to secure that we had to have the grave and dignified lady in the left corner as a chaperon. We others were allowed to go alone, but Maggie wasn't."

The point of the scene was that every one was to be represented as doing what she could not do: Maggie was never a musician, and still less a soloist!

Miss Holmes writes—

. . . . . .

"When we were at Lady Margaret Hall, Mr. Ruskin paid us a visit and stayed to tea. At that time he was fond of complaining of the luxurious rooms of students generally—too many armchairs, etc., etc. He gave us an idea of what he would have us taught—and then said: 'But first of all I would have you taught common-sense.' In her very quiet voice Maggie said, 'And how would you begin?' and Mr. Ruskin said, 'My dear young lady, I cannot tell you!'"

Miss E. F. Jourdain writes—

"I first met Maggie in October, 1883, when we both came up as students to Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford. She was then a tall, somewhat angular girl, with a good deal of eager graciousness about her. She had a mobile mouth, a very fresh laugh, and what perhaps struck us most, a great love for discussion on many subjects.

"As a student she rather lived on her nerves: her friendships meant a very great deal to her and used up her strength.

"Looking back, I can quite understand the home anxiety that dictated letters of advice to Maggie about sleep and food and tonics, for even with the utmost care she was apt to be easily overdone, chiefly because she invariably put so much force and feeling into what she did. She became the oracle of our party of students, and her influence was most healthy, for she looked upon all girls as interesting, and took them as they were apart from accidents of birth and ability. She got great

enjoyment out of the varied characters of her friends, and delighted in analysis and description of character. I find some records of her judgments.

"She writes of one of the circle: 'A—— is so absolutely and simply natural that she could not be artificial if she tried with both hands. No one could ever know her intimately, for she does not know herself, nor is she conscious that there is anything in herself beyond herself. She is cold-blooded and would be frightened at feeling a strong emotion. She has no misty corners to her mind.'

"In my experience Maggie always insisted on clear statement in a discussion. Rash generalisations were torn to pieces. She 'coached' us in soundness of speech, and never lost kindness when she argued with us. I think in those days I never made a general remark to her without being asked to establish and prove it. Her own statements were most carefully argued out. I see, *e.g.*, in old letters and diaries—'Maggie says that in a world of atheists social needs would produce a moral code,' with a long argument adduced on the subject of sin, intended to show that the conception of a personal God was not necessary to the primitive idea of sin. In another place—'Maggie said she felt no interest whatever in theology, it was only where philosophy came in that she was at all interested. She had tried to read Lightfoot's 'Commentary on the Philippians,' but it didn't interest her to know who were 'they of Cæsar's household,' for instance.

"In later years I well remember her sympathy with minds that could only approach religion through thought, and her anxiety to show that this was a

real method of approach, so far as it went. Another recorded word of hers suggests the line of thought on which she worked in *The Venture of Rational Faith* :—'Maggie said one day on the subject of searching after truth that the end of knowledge is only to find that you don't know anything, and begin on a new platform of faith.' "

Mrs. Lea writes—

"I had heard of Maggie before I ever saw her, because my eldest brother, who was a tutor of Keble College in the early eighties, had told me that he was at that time coaching the daughter of the Archbishop of Canterbury at Lady Margaret Hall for the Honour School of Philosophy. He was specially interested in the fact, because she was the first woman he had taught, and he said he expected to discern at once the feminine difference between her and his men-pupils. This difference he did not, however, discover; but he was from the first astonished at the extraordinary keenness of her intellect, and by a combination of powers in her which he thought were seldom found in the same person,—her comprehensive view of a subject as a whole, and her incisive and unerring power of analysis. She could entirely identify herself with certain views and opinions, and at the same time stand completely detached, and balance the arguments for and against her position with what he called 'absolute remorselessness.' He always lamented that she could not read for 'Greats' in the ordinary way, and thought it a gross injustice, for he would have liked her work to be compared with that of the men of her own standing. He was convinced that

Photo by Fredk. Argall, Truro.]

MAGGIE.

Aged about 19.

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she had a brilliant future before her, and that she would do great and original work in philosophy. Long afterwards, when she consulted him about the early chapters of *The Venture of Rational Faith*, he said to me: 'It is extraordinary how she has developed.' I reminded him of the 'feminine difference,' and he said: 'Yes, I can see something of it now. The "remorselessness" is gone, but she has gained enormously in power and sympathy.'

"My brother himself appeared to me in those days a perfect monument of learning, and it was therefore with a good deal of curiosity that on the first night of my own residence at Lady Margaret Hall, as a student, I scanned the faces of the older members of the College to discern this wonder amongst women, whose intellect had made such an impression upon him. He was no hand at personal description, and I was quite at sea. I fixed upon the one that I thought cleverest (as a matter of fact upon the rather pathetic reserved face of Gertrude Church), and I remember well my surprise—I had almost said disappointment—when I learnt my mistake. Maggie did not at all realise my youthful ideal of a genius. To begin with she was a girl and not a woman, and particularly girlish-looking for her age, rather tall and slender, with fresh red and white colouring, smooth hair simply parted over a forehead of childlike smoothness, and something childlike too in her large beautiful blue-grey eyes. Others in my place might have seen even then, others probably did see, the distinction of the well-cut nose and flexible mouth, and the balance of intellect and will in the lines of brow and chin, or been arrested by the tones of the low clear thrilling voice;

but it is certain that none of these things struck me at first sight. I was only amazed at her air of simplicity and naturalness, and, if I must confess it, almost aghast too at her readiness to laugh at the most frivolous jokes, and her manner of seeming to hang almost breathlessly upon the words of a speaker who was uttering sentiments of no great wisdom. This manner which I noticed then of ' almost breathless listening,' even when it seemed that by no possibility could she be really interested, was one she never lost. I used to accuse her of it, and tell her that it encouraged people to be egotistical, and to think that their outpourings were of enthralling importance to her. I am sure to this day that nothing in the world was ever more stimulating than the eager—' Yes—yes, well ? And then—— ? ' with which she urged one to proceed, even when the recital must have been boring and dreary enough to reduce most people to despair. But with her this was a sort of counterpart in what I may call the plane of humanity to the quality my brother had remarked of her intellect. She could completely identify herself in sympathy with those who confided in her, and at the same time completely detach herself and sum up the situation with unerring exactness. Many mistakes were made about her in early days because people failed to grasp how evenly balanced were these two sides of her character. Those who abused her sympathy with their merciless outpourings would have done well to realise her critical power, and those who realised and shrank from it can never have gauged the deep tenderness of her sympathy.

" Many of us in those days (though of course by no

means all) were in a state of inward revolt against the accepted order of things, and while we obeyed the authorities set over us, we at the same time rebelled against them. Some of us conceived ourselves to be victims of the tragedy of temperaments in our homes, some girded fretfully at all religious creeds and formulas without exactly openly disavowing them. Maggie was always the recipient of many confidences, and how completely she herself differed from those who complained to her and how utterly her attitude towards both these questions differed from theirs, must have struck every one who thus approached her quite as much as anything she said. Religion already seemed with her the real mainspring of life and action; her home the place in which, in its largest sense, she might be said to be most at home. These were the two impressions graven first and deepest on my mind with regard to her, and through all the years that I was to know her they remained thus or only strengthened in intensity. I remember all this the more distinctly because it certainly was not the fashion for us at College to speak much of our homes—perhaps for the reason I have given above—and she fell into it with me by a mere accident. When we went for walks together we used to play a kind of game of telling each other stories of what we meant to be and to do when we left College, and her stories so often included references to 'her own people and her father's house' that I used to stop her and ask for explanations. Gradually I came to know all her family through her, until I grew to look upon the real story of her childhood as the romance, and cared no more about her dreams of the future. It was

not that she could not criticise those who stood so near to her ; she could and did add many of those keen and shrewd touches which proved her piercing and ' remorseless ' vision, but these only served to prove how deep her real appreciation of them was.

" It is extraordinary, however, to remember how many different things she could do and did do and into which she threw her whole heart, quite apart from the fact that she was reading for the Honour School of Philosophy. She must have had extraordinary powers of concentration as well as swiftness of execution, for I can never remember to have heard her plead her work as a reason for not doing something else. She never, I think, exactly took the initiative in games, but she threw all her weight on to the side which did. When lacrosse was substituted for hockey, she played the new game with as much keenness as the old, and she was eager for the College to have a boat on the river, and to qualify herself for rowing in it by learning to swim the distance required as a condition. She seemed so strong and enthusiastic about outdoor sports that it was years before I could get it into my head that she was not perhaps physically as strong as she seemed. I remember her throwing me easily in a wrestling match in the College gymnasium, and though she was never exactly boisterous, she could enjoy a game of blind man's buff or prisoner's base like a child.

" She generally spoke at College debates, and she spoke clearly and incisively, but her manner in those days was a little hesitating and diffident. She seemed to think while she was speaking, and to be reviewing the whole subject rapidly, while she noted

points. She never had a doubt as to her own conclusions, but she seemed anxious to give due weight to all opposition. The charm of her voice always arrested attention, but I doubt whether many of those who heard her in those days guessed at the power she would develop later to hold a large audience by her fearless logic and shrewd insight into social and political questions. It was the same with conversation then. She seemed to think too much of the subject as a whole to be able to throw off light or superficial criticisms. Later in life her conversation flowed easily—she could seize upon the main points of her opponent's arguments and demolish them in a few telling words—delivered with an aptness and dryness which were both arresting and disconcerting.

"The instinct for drama and dramatic effect which was so strong in some members of her family was not, I think, so strong in her. She liked to see good acting, and could throw herself into a part she had undertaken to play in amateur theatricals as wholeheartedly as she could throw herself into other recreations, but I do not think it really made a strong appeal to her, any more than I think she found herself helped by ritual in her religion, although she could enjoy it artistically. I always thought that her dramatic gift showed itself best in reading aloud and in repeating poetry. The expressiveness and flexibility of her voice lent itself to every shade of meaning, and her pure enunciation was at all times a joy to hear.

"I remember that while we were at College Mr. Ruskin was induced to come and have tea with us all in hall, and Maggie was challenged to quote

something from 'In Memoriam,' and repeated the lines beginning 'Love was and is my Lord and King,' with her usual simplicity and expressiveness. Ruskin seemed absolutely delighted with the aptness of the words and with her manner of giving them, and sat for a long time after tea talking of poets and poetry.

"She said of herself all her life long that she was no judge of character, and had no intuitions about it as other people had, so that she could only arrive at an opinion by a process of analysis and elimination. I believe many people agreed with her in this opinion of herself, and perhaps in a limited sense they and she were right. She judged others generously, and never with the finality which most very young people mete out. She would always admit a new possibility and be ready to hear fresh evidence. 'You see, personally I'm so glad to be mistaken and to find that it is I who have been wrong,' was her attitude. She wanted every one to have their own individuality and never wished to press arbitrary standards on any one. We were always discussing motives and character at College, and we saw plainly enough the imperfections and shortcomings of each other. Few of us perhaps could understand that quality of detachment in her which would both see the fault and see beyond it. She was often accused of making too much of certain people and spoiling them, and especially of noticing too soon the new students who, it was thought, should be taught to show deference to their seniors. It was the fashion to laugh at her and try to restrain her, and though she made light of the thing and could write amusedly of it, yet she certainly felt in some degree the sting of the criticisms.

Both then and always she disliked to be out of harmony with her surroundings, and was almost abnormally sensitive to the mental attitude of others towards herself. She writes on one occasion: 'I find Miss —— distinctly interesting, but "the passage" is so severe to me about encouraging new girls, that I haven't hitherto dared to hint at Christian names. It's just as well, for she needs a little suppressing. H—— gives her that from time to time most judiciously and with much dignity.'

"The habit of discussing character grew rife amongst us one term, and led to very obvious evils. Some of us arose at last and denounced and renounced the habit most determinedly, and even those who did not renounce it felt conscience-stricken and bound to denounce it. Maggie would never do either the one or the other. She then and always defended the discussion of character, which she said was the most interesting thing in the world to discuss, and the best way of getting to understand people. Nor would she agree to the compromise that one might say good of people but not evil—declaring that this was a sort of bearing of false witness, and that to ignore people's faults was only to raise expectations which were bound to be disappointed. She always, however, deprecated most strongly the handing on of criticisms to the criticised with the name of the critic, since no one, she said, could ever repeat anything exactly in the manner in which it had been said.

"There was a somewhat kindred subject which it was also very much the custom to discuss, namely the attraction which certain characters possess for certain others, and the romantic friendships resulting

therefrom. I do not remember that any one except Maggie openly defended them, but, as in the other case, she took her own line, and could not be moved from it. For this she was often criticised, both then and later. Perhaps she and her critics did not understand one another, and little wonder! Maggie had a real genius for friendship. She could arouse in others a perfect enthusiasm of devotion, while she in turn was capable of ideal and romantic attachments. She accepted such devotion with the absolute simplicity which always characterised her. She could receive as generously as she gave, and I think that in some sort of way she felt that her acceptance gave the other person a real claim on her. But this did not at all imply that she ever tolerated morbidity or emotionalism. 'You say,' she wrote to one of her friends, 'that not to put feeling first in your life, as you have always done, would seem like self-murder to you. It is just that kind of self-murder which we are called upon to commit.'"

All these recollections give an impression of vivid life, freshness, and spring. She came out into the sunshine, and above all had the sense, so dear to her, that she could play a real part and intermingle with other lives; hitherto it had been a spectatorial affair as though she had been preparing herself for something unknown.

Her letters are full of excitement and even glee. I give a few extracts.

(*To her Mother.*)

Lady Margaret Hall,
Oxford.

. . . . .

Miss F—— has developed a most extraordinary faculty for asking questions at Bible-class which you couldn't possibly guess the answers to—

Quest. "What do jewels remind you of, besides being bright?"

(Can you guess it? I couldn't.)

Ans. Durableness!!!! Hence moral, of course——

There was another *much* worse one——

Quest. "When you see a new railway running across a country, does it generally follow the rivers and so on or doesn't it?"

(Now this answer you couldn't POSSIBLY guess, so you need not try.)

Ans. Sometimes it does, and sometimes it doesn't.

Moral obvious—because sometimes it has to go across rivers and through mountains and sometimes it hasn't!

. . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

Lady Margaret Hall,
Oxford.
(1884.)

. . . . .

Dean Burgon has been preaching the University Sermon this morning, a perfectly outrageous sermon, all about the women's Exams., the congregation in fits of laughter apparently nearly all through. They

really laughed quite audibly, Miss Lucas said—I wasn't there. Rather horrid, isn't it? He said all the things, it seems, which he had said in his Letter—about women becoming men and so on. He said, for instance, that the women who went in for these examinations would be "instruments of death and channels unto evil."

. . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

Lady Margaret Hall,
Oxford.
(1884.)

. . . . .

It is so delightful. My bird and a goldfinch of Miss Lucas' have struck up an acquaintance with a little wild hen-goldfinch. I don't know whether it has been a caged bird, but it is very tame. It comes into our rooms, and into an empty cage of Miss Lucas', where it spends the nights. I have clipped my bird's wings, and take it out in the garden, and then the goldfinch comes and visits it and bows to it and behaves in the prettiest way altogether. My bird is tamer than ever and runs about after me in the garden to attack me.

. . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

Lady Margaret Hall.
(1884.)

The deputation* was great fun. We have had 3 meetings—because first they proposed a plan of

* From Somerville College, about forming a Joint Debating Society.

the constitution of the society to us, then we had to get the feeling (" sense " as they very professionally call it) of Lady Margaret on the plan. Lady Margaret highly disapproved and proposed another plan. They had to get the opinion of Somerville on that plan—then we met and agreed and were amiable over it. They *are* so professional about it. At the first meeting we had to vote somebody into the Chair (there were only 8 of us present) but the only thing that the Chairman did officially was to turn to the person next her and say, " Then will you begin." One of the chief points was to avoid the supposed canvassing. The Somerville Chairwoman declared that at Somerville there never was any canvassing, but we heard from a private source that before the last election two chief Somervillians went about canvassing with chocolate drops !

I must stop.

. . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

Lady Margaret Hall.
(1884.)

. . . . .

. . . At Mrs B——'s last Friday, Miss B—— was " going on " till she finally said that you ought to try to like bores because you would meet them in heaven. Two or three people were looking slightly amused, but N—— suddenly without warning exploded—she is given to bursts of laughter in inconvenient places. It was perfectly awful, for no one thoroughly recovered for the rest of the time.

We had such a delicious expedition yesterday to Bagley Wood—a place near here—Oxford is perfectly lovely just now.

. . . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

Lady Margaret Hall.
(1884.)

. . . . . .

The Prices * are going to ask me to join a ladies' reading society on Saturdays here. But they are going to read "A Blot on the Scutcheon." What shall I say? There is another girl who is asked to go and wants to, and I am not sure if she will be able to go alone. Would you answer yes, or no, on a postcard, as soon as you can?

It was so "exciting" the other day at the School of Art—Ruskin himself was there, and he came and spoke to me about my drawing, and corrected it and so on. He is going to Lecture here this term—and we are going to them.

My work is so jolly. It is so delicious doing the Greek philosophers—I *do* like Methods of Ethics too, it is so beautifully fair, but I think it is extremely hard to read.

. . . . . .

Did I tell you that Mr. Gent said that the paper I did on philosophy on the work I got up in the vacation was a first-class one? He said I had got

* The wife and daughters of Prof. Bartholomew Price (afterwards Master of Pembroke College), made their beautiful old house in St. Giles'—the Judges' Lodgings—one of the social and artistic centres of Oxford life.

a philosophical position now—isn't that a comfort—I didn't know it. He recommends my taking up an ethical position too. Toodle! Ha! ha! As to the Ethics and Pol. Econ. I suppose I ought to be able to get through them.

. . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

Lady Margaret Hall,
Oxford.
(1884.)

. . . . .

By the way, I must tell you what Ruskin said to me yesterday. I had been painting a copy of a purple and white snail-shell of his, when he came and stood behind me and said, "That is very beautiful." Of course at first I thought he meant his own was very beautiful, it would have been so very like him. But he went on to say: "I can't teach you any more. I shall be very glad if you will come to my School, and I will give you all the attention that I can—but if you can lay on colour, and round the shell like that, you can paint anything—you have only to study nature and read my lectures as they come out [isn't that like him?]. *All* I can say is that your painting is as good as the copy." Then he went on to say that I might do anything I liked—Turner or anything, and that I had better think it over in the Christmas Vacation. Then I had to ask him to come up to tea at L.M.H., having been deputed to do so by Miss Wordsworth—which he accepted in the most amiable manner. He has been to Somerville already. As he went away he said: "And if you are going to stay on at Lady Margaret's, they

will install you as drawing-mistress." It was rather surprising altogether because he had been rather severe on me at the beginning of term.

Your lovingest daughter,

M. B.

(*To her Sister.*)

Lady Margaret Hall.
(1884.)

. . . . .

There have been one or two little fusses here of a most absurd nature. Did I tell you about A——'s chair in chapel? She and two or three others appropriated chairs for themselves—one of the new girls, Miss C—— was constantly taking the chair which A—— had set her heart on—from one or two things she said she was believed to do this on purpose—probably out of spite. Plans were laid against her. Miss E—— went early into the chapel, took A——'s chair, then just before prayers began, when Miss C—— had seated herself, she crossed over and sat down on another. Miss C—— suspected something then, having been absolutely innocent before; Miss B—— spoke to her about it, and she went into floods of tears, then she spoke to me about it and wept again. Then I told A—— who went to speak to her about it and she wept for the third time. That was the end I think. Did you ever hear anything much more babyish from beginning to end. You like hearing about rows, don't you?

(*To her Mother.*)

Lady Margaret Hall,
Oxford.
(1885.)

. . . . .

I have begun my Turner at last. It is an unfinished sketch but a very lovely one—all the better for being unfinished, as one can see the way it is done.

. . . . .

F—— is one of those intensely virtuous people who perform their duty entirely and consequently never committing, as far as one can see, any positive faults, rather tend to be entirely unconscious of their own defects. That is a strong way of putting it, but I think you will see what I mean. A sort of person who has an intensely strong sense of duty and rather narrow ideas.

Mother, do you know, the thought of you makes me feel the existence of an active and powerful principle of good in the world and in people. I mean you seem to illuminate things for me somehow.

I don't so much care about Mr. Braithwaite's "City on a hill"—but I think I understand the meaning of "ye are the light of the world" in a new way.

. . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

Lady Margaret Hall,
Oxford.
(1885.)

. . . . .

Really the changes in the Hall are too odd. It is at present more or less emerging out of a state of

morbidity in which every one was always having scenes (of an affectionate and agitating description) with every one else. The reaction more or less tends to make every one rather dissatisfied with, and severe on, other people. This also it will get over I think.

. . . . . .

I have been reading a new thing on Free-Will—in Green's "Prolegomena to Ethics"—do read the chapter about free-will, if you see the book, and tell me what you think about it. I think it is better than anything I have read before on the subject—all the same I don't think it gets one quite out of the difficulty. The whole book is awfully interesting. It treats the whole subject from a less matter-of-fact point of view than most books. It makes it more living, and gives one less a feeling that the whole thing could be summed up and written down if you only had time enough. It is about the most difficult book I ever tried to read, however.

. . . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

Lady Margaret Hall,
Oxford.
(1885.)

. . . . . .

My work is awfully nice this term—I have political economy * twice a week. It was most absurd—after the second essay that I sent in for that, my coach told me that he didn't think he could

* She wrote, long afterwards, "One feels how dreadfully thin and abstract, and therefore practically though not logically incorrect Oxford-taught Political Economy is."

help me much, and that if I found it better to read alone, I could give up my lessons with him. As that is not true, however, it doesn't matter. I have moral philosophy with a very good person indeed, a pupil of Green of the Prolegomena. He gives me awful essays to do at present—the relation of Moral Philosophy to practice. Then I go to Political Science lectures and write papers for them, and go to another course at the Schools. Altogether it is most delightful. It is so nice getting back to work again—especially such inspiring sort of work as the Moral Philosophy.

. . . . .

(*To her Sister Nelly.*)

Kenwyn.
(1886.)

My child, I am crammed with gossip.

. . . . .

I want to know very much if I may definitely come back on Thursday week. Or if I came on Tuesday, I should not miss more than one of Papa's sermons *which I dreadfully* want to hear.

Haven't done a stroke of work and I see next to no prospect of it.

. . . . .

I can't possibly stay because I shall be homesick then.

. . . . .

You must be having a simply glorious time I should think. I hope you won't spoil it by thinking of your faults. I am *not* going to rack my brain to get any more to suggest by letter now at any rate.

. . . . .

Mama has a little rheumatism but transcendentalism has departed. There is a book on Dyspepsia advertised in *Illustrated London News*, price 1*d*.—it is *advice!*

(*To her Sister.*)

Lady Margaret Hall,
Oxford.
(1886.)

DEAREST NELL,

You are an angel to be so prompt. I am so glad to get the money too for I was so reduced that I shouldn't have been able to pay my washing bill.

Of course you couldn't read Sunodos, my infant, because it's a Greek word written in English letters meaning synod, σύνοδος. As for the other, perhaps it was a little illegible. My goody, the walls of Jericho must have gone indeed!

. . . . . .

(*To her Sister.*)

Lady Margaret Hall,
Oxford.
(1886.)

DEAREST NELL,

We are going to act the *Rose and the Ring*. Can you darling sweet—send me all the hair we have got (I mean our beards and wigs) I should like to have them as soon as possible.

Also my child you haven't yet sent me Phantasms of the Dead, which I want very much. Did you remember about my dress?

That's all for the present, thank you dear.

. . . . . .

(*To her Sister.*)

Lady Margaret Hall,
Oxford.
(1886.)

DEAREST NELLIE,

Thank you very much for your letter—I hardly think you could make it nicer for me at home than you do. With you there I do feel in a sort of way eager to come home in spite of minding, as one must do, leaving this place. I only wish somehow London didn't bring out all the wickedness that is in me.

Look here—about this old exam. I wish people weren't expecting me so much to get a first. Do you think you could modify their expectations at home. You see Miss Mason only got a second, and I feel that I shall be paralysed as soon as I see a paper.

(*To her Sister.*)

Lady Margaret Hall,
(1886.)

. . . . .

If you see my dear little Hegel anywhere about (if no one wants to read it as a devotional book), you might bring it with you. I have something else very important to ask you but I forget what it is. When oh when shall I hear about the Reading Party?

E—— is of very maturish age—25 or 24—and has been a High School Mistress. What do you think of that, my cat?

. . . . . .

All goes well here—but oh—my books! Had you done ½ the work you ought to have before the exam.?

(*To her Mother.*)

Lady Margaret Hall.
(1886.)

My dearest Mother,

We went to hear Michael Davitt here the other night. I feel as if there were rather more to be said about Home Rule than I thought. He spoke very well and answered questions excellently. But I don't think I believe in Home Rule on the whole —and I do hate arguments founded on the rights of humanity.

Your lovingest daughter,
Maggie.

It will be nice to be at home. I am getting greedy for it though this term has been *quite* nice.

(*To her Mother.*)

Lady Margaret Hall,
Oxford.
(1886.)

. . . . .

There are three new ones—one looks interesting. In strict confidence Miss Wordsworth informs me that she belongs to a very free-thinking set—and that I am to allow her to have her say to me.

. . . . .

It is really like summer here though its coolish

at night. The trees are looking lovely. Work is the last thing that suggests itself.

. . . . . .

My work is nice—Political Science particularly interesting. After being brought face to face with Constitutional Monarchy* I feel I must have a vocation to study Political Science.

. . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

Lady Margaret Hall,
Oxford.
(1886.)

. . . . .

The debating society has got itself settled exquisitely so I feel inclined to crow over the Somervilles. I am going to have a bell I think to call people to order—it's quite necessary if Miss R—— is there for she walks about and enters into conversation while we are voting and you can't call her to order by name.

. . . . .

We went to *such* a good lecture on Buddhism yesterday. I want to read some more about it—because people seem to say that Edwin Arnold is so unfair.

Did you know that among his various births Buddha was born 6 times as a snipe once as a frog and twice as a pig ?

. . . . .

Might I have some money, I have hardly any. I had to pay my exam. fees.

* She had been presented at Court.

(To her Mother.)

Lady Margaret Hall,
Oxford.
(1886.)

. . . . . .

. . . Everything goes well here. Having searched Oxford for a Pol. Econ. coach in vain Mrs. Johnson* has applied to some one in London who won't take me, so we are turning our attention to Cambridge.

The lessons I have with Mr. E—— are interesting now, but they are apt to develope arguments which trace back to some subject like Free Will or the Origin of Evil and don't get settled. Yesterday he declared that some opinions, (which I hold), were not really consistent with Christianity nor even with Theism—but I think they were—much more so than his at any rate.

. . . . . .

We have been having a long and furious discussion here too on the reconciliation of Science and Religion. Janet, Edith and I three to one against Eleanòr Jourdain. Miss B—— was so nice the other day—she gave me to understand that Miss P—— was so good for girls because she had really gone into all the questions of the day—" the first chapter of Genesis and all that." Wouldn't it be a simplified world if that was the worst. " I larft I did."

. . . . . .

* Mrs. Arthur Johnson, wife of the Chaplain of All Souls, was one of the organisers of women's education in Oxford.

(*To her Mother.*)

Lady Margaret Hall,
Oxford.
(1886.)

. . . . .

This term is quiet. I like Miss F—— a good deal only there is so little time left—and so many people—and I am supposed to encourage her too much as she is rather inclined to assert herself—but I like people who assert themselves.

. . . . .

My work is like a nightmare—I mean it seems so impossible to get done this term what I ought to do. But I suppose that isn't an unusual experience. Miss Wordsworth happily announced the other day that she wasn't going to expect any of us to get a first which is a comfort. But if those Somervilles do (which they will) I shall be "seriously annoyed."

. . . . .

Deep despair is seizing nearly every examinee —I am calmer than most I think—but the harassed expressions of the general public are awful. Examinations go on too for these next three weeks. This week preliminary and Rudiments—next week the Honours History; A—— is consequently perfectly blankly depressed—and then all the Pass and Honours. Our exam. is about 6 hours a day for nearly a week—isn't that awful.

. . . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

Lady Margaret Hall,
Oxford.
(1886.)

MY DEAREST MOTHER,

Thank you very much indeed for your letter. It is curious to be getting to the end of a stage in your life certainly—as of course this is in a way. Only the nice part is that with everything else one feels a sort of eagerness to make a fresh start in the next.

This term has been most delightful in many ways, and tranquil enough in spite of exams. I am not going to do much more work now.

It must have been nice at Addington. How I will paint this autumn and next year. Mr. Macdonald—the School of Art Master—is going to give me letters to the National Gallery people—so I shall be able to practise there.

. . . . .

(*To a Friend.*)

Lady Margaret Hall,
Oxford.
(1886.)

. . .

Don't abuse me inwardly if this is a short letter. When that old exam. is over I will write more. That sounds as if I were working tremendously, which I am not.

I was glad to see you again—there are always such a lot of things that you won't tell me by letter that I have to grind out of you when I see you. I am glad you told me all that you had in your

mind to tell me—but I wish there had been more time.

How nice it would be if one had a convenient little desert or hermitage hard by to retire to if one wanted to talk to one person.

Oh dear, how dreadfully silly I am getting. It's the effect of getting a rapid review of all my work for the last three years.

Beatrice is so melancholy to-day. It's awful—an air of despair is settling down on the household. I don't feel depressed a bit, but I can't help appearing so—isn't it a pity—partly it is the desire to be in harmony with my surroundings I suppose.

Mind you write to me.

. . . . .

(*To a Friend.*)

Lady Margaret Hall,
(1886.)

. . .

You *have* been good to me this week—and I have liked your letters *so* much.

I wish I could write you a nice letter, but I don't think I can to-day.

I didn't laugh at your letter—at any of them in fact. Why did you think I might? You know quite well that I never do laugh at you when you talk to me seriously.

I do agree with you about the want of purpose in people's lives. Don't awful times come over you when you think there is no good in living at all? I think you do wrong in separating Christianity from the desire for good in itself. I can't

write as you want me to now—I am sorry—I do feel so vacant and inwardly dead to-day.

I am not glad the exams. are over—I liked them very much while they were going on, whatever bosh I wrote, and waiting to hear the result isn't pleasant. It will be out very soon I believe—oh dear—it is horrid.

It isn't at all nice either coming to the end of a period in your life—and yet just now I don't want to stay at Oxford. One gets perhaps just a little the feeling of being shut in, of having rather narrow interests—and knowing or at least caring about very little outside. Of course it isn't necessary but I do it.

I should think this was the worst howl I have ever written you isn't it—but I am not altogether howling, so don't think it.

CHAPTER V

LONDON

All this time, life at Lambeth and Addington had been in full swing. It was a curious and exciting experience, for we had lived very quietly hitherto. My father had always thrown himself with such intensity into his work that there had been little room for outside activities. He had never gone in for external preaching or committees or social functions. He was "a dark horse," as was said of him by some one when he came to London. He was just known as a man who had succeeded in a singular way in establishing institutions, Wellington College, the Theological School at Lincoln, the new Diocese and Cathedral at Truro. Suddenly he found himself at the head of ecclesiastical affairs, and a great officer of State.

First of all came Lambeth, perhaps the stateliest and most historical house in London. We were not quite unfamiliar with it. There is a tower there, Lollards' Tower as it is romantically but unhistorically called, from the fact that certain cells in it had been used to incarcerate ecclesiastical offenders, though assuredly not Lollards. The rings to which their chains were attached were still *in situ,* with the pathetic inscriptions they had carved on the rough panelling to beguile sad hours. This building

abutted on the chapel and was detached from the house. Archbishop Tait had made of it a College for Bishops living at a distance, and allotted sets of rooms there, to my father among others, so that we had most of us been there at various times. There was a little gallery on pillars which opened out from Lollards' Tower into the nave of the chapel; and we had often gone in there for the services, seen Archbishop Tait moving slowly to his place, and heard his deep voice below joining in the prayers.

The mediæval stateliness of the palace itself is highly impressive. You enter from the street by a vast towered gate of many stories, then under a second archway into the great front court, with the old buttressed Hall, now a library, on the left, the long range of stable-buildings on the right, and the main building in front of you. The actual house is a place of huge corridors and spacious rooms, richly furnished, and with an immense number of fine portraits. The dining-room is the old Guard-room, with a timbered roof, and behind it there is a maze of passages and staircases, where you can look into the chapel from a little gallery by the altar. The chapel itself is ancient and dignified, very finely adorned. Every corner of the house is full of history and tradition. We boys, for instance, had as a sitting-room a great thick-walled oak-floored room, with deep window embrasures and oak beams, at the top of a tower called Cranmer's Tower, approached by a winding stone staircase and looking out on the river. There is an extensive garden, with a terrace and some fine old trees, opening on to a wide space of grass, now a public park, but then

LAMBETH PALACE.

[*To face page* 80.

reserved for boys' cricket-clubs. The house was cool and silent, and the noise of London remote. My sisters had as their sitting-room a big chamber on the upper corridor, looking out on the garden. It was impossible not to be affected by all this magnificence.

From the first my father was very hospitable. There were state dinner-parties to which came many notable people, there were garden-parties, with the court full of carriages and a stream of guests moving about the garden and house. But apart from these festivities, we were never alone ; there were numbers of officials and ecclesiastics whom my father had to see, and day after day, at breakfast, luncheon, tea, and dinner, there were always visitors, often very interesting figures, who came for some specific interview. It was a most busy house, with strangers and friends always coming and going. My father was little visible except at meals. Letters and interviews in the morning, meetings and the House of Lords in the afternoon, reading, writing, preparation of sermons, speeches, and addresses, filled his day and went on far into the night ; but he was always in good spirits at Lambeth. He was fond of riding, and we often rode with him to the Row or to Battersea Gardens. Maggie became an excellent horsewoman, and I can see her in the little tall hat and long habit then worn, coming deliberately down the stairs, with her half-diffident, half-stately air, for a ride. Then there were parties and receptions to go to, at which one came into contact with all sorts of interesting people. So that the London life was full of activity and bustle, with the sense moreover that one was, if not exactly at the centre

of affairs, at least at the centre of a great and vigorous institution. The Church of England is very unlike most institutions. It depends little on policy or discipline, much upon tradition and dignity. It is not easy to give a logical account of its methods, but it has had its own development and is congenial to the spirit of the nation. If my father did not ever quite fathom the political system of England, loose, opportunist, swayed by social currents, easy-going as it is, he had an extraordinary knowledge of ecclesiastical feeling, and led the Church with unfailing tact and confidence, besides exercising a very patriarchal function in the Colonial Churches. The clergy of the day felt that, whatever happened, my father understood their position and their difficulties. Thus there was always the sense at Lambeth that my father was the General of a great Order, so to speak, and held the reins firmly in his hands.

The contrast of Addington was very great. Addington was a huge country-house, a real château, in a large park with beautiful woodlands, with the suburbs coming up to the gates almost, but with the most rustic of villages behind, and a remote pastoral countryside. The life there was extremely quiet, but for occasional parties of distinguished visitors. It was a country-house without amusements, except for riding and little games. Our great friends and companions were the households of Charles and Henry Goschen, who lived close by; and the Mylnes, the Carrs, and John Reeve, who lived successively at the Vicarage. My sisters had a big room, called the schoolroom, looking out on to a lawn and a terrace, with the great cedar-tree supported by innumerable props; beyond, the park

ADDINGTON.

[*To face page* 82.

and woodland stretched in all directions. Even then we were not often alone, but there was none of the stir of Lambeth.

Nelly flung herself into the exterior life both of Lambeth and Addington. She had a district in Lambeth and visited diligently, while at Addington she made friends with the villagers, taught, organised experiments, made herself useful in many ways.

But this was not so much in Maggie's line. Her tastes were never exactly sociable, though she was always dutiful. But she had not Nelly's companionableness, nor did she find amusement and interest, as Nelly did, in every human being within reach. Maggie read more and painted more. She wrote a little manual of political economy, called *Capital, Labour, Trade and the Outlook*, and she planned a philosophical work. She was always ready to lay her work aside, but left to herself, she took it up again quietly, and all her employments were deliberate and careful. She travelled about a good deal ; stayed with the families of her Oxford fellow-students, and her relations with friends always took up much of her time and thought. Much as she had enjoyed Oxford she felt the stimulus of the London life. One of her friends writes—

"A year after she left Oxford, she came upon a visit to Lady Margaret Hall at the end of the summer term. She had often told me of her shyness, and of the torment it was to her as a young girl to face the many guests who, at Truro and Lambeth, naturally came to her home. We took a Sunday morning walk round Magdalen meadows, and talked of my future. I said I should like to

stay in Oxford if possible ; and she said ' Oh, don't do that, Janet. I used to feel like that, but now that I have been a year away, I know that though Oxford is all very well, there is one thing better, and that is London.' "

I add here one or two letters belonging to the time when she was still at Oxford, but gradually picking up the threads of the London life.

(*To her Mother.*)

Waterloo,
Truro.
(1884.)

. . . . .

Please tell Papa that they call him " their dear old father " at Idless. Two men were quarrelling, Mrs. Cornish told me, and they said that if their dear old father had been there, this wouldn't have been allowed to go on. Mrs. Maclean * said he was like a father *to her* yesterday.

(*To her Mother.*)

Truro.
(1884.)

DEAREST MOTHER,

Thank you so much for your note. I hope you liked Windsor. Did the Queen kiss you ? I hope she came to her right mind about it.

It is so beautiful down here just now. It is quite different being down in the country even to being at Addington.

By the way, you said that " My Pags " in Lucy's

* The coachman's wife, considerably my father's senior.

letter made you ill. It makes me even iller to hear Miss P—— call Staffa "Stafflings," and Miss B—— call Staffa "Taffeta," and Watch, "Watchie-watch." It's all very well for once, but I get worse and worse every time I hear it.

Evelyn showed me the choughs on Thursday. They are the most fascinating birds, but the difficulty is where we can keep them at Lambeth. I don't quite see. They are too large to be kept always in the cage and we can't very well clip their wings and let them out at Lambeth, as we could at Addington, for fear of cats. They are most delightful birds however. We took one of them out because we thought he couldn't fly. He instantly flew up to the top of the house, and then went wheeling round and round till he saw a servant come out of the house, when he instantly swooped down upon her head, and we caught it so.

Please give my love to every one.

Your lovingest daughter,

M. BENSON.

(*To her brother Arthur.*)

Lambeth Palace, S.E.
(1884.)

. . . . .

We had the most awfully amusing dinner * on Wednesday night while you were out. I had a Sheriff to take me in who talked a good deal, and besought me with the greatest earnestness to learn cooking. Mother's health was going to have been

* The Festival of the Sons of the Clergy, always celebrated by a dinner at Lambeth.

proposed again, only she had it crossed out. What the Mayor could have found to say about it more than last time I can't think. The speeches were amusing, for every one spoke as if their connection with the Sons of the Clergy was the one bright spot in their lives.

Nellie is getting so awfully energetic. Ever since I have been home she has been doing hardly anything except committees and visiting and taking classes. I feel most frightfully idle.

. . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

Addington Park,
Croydon.
Oct. 11th.

. . . . .

Please tell Nellie that 6 boys came to-day—I don't know the name of one of them so I haven't put it down—the very self-sufficient and conversational, light-haired boy in the third class. I made too many mistakes in the first hymn to try any more, and I gave them such a dull lesson—but I made it last till 4 o'clock.

. . . . .

Her Oxford life came to an end in due course. Mrs. Lea writes—

"In 1886 Maggie got her First in the Women's Honour School of Philosophy and most characteristically announced the fact to some of her friends on a post-card, in the words—scribbled almost illegibly: '*I have got a 1st*' (*sic*). My brother, who had coached her, wrote to tell me the same thing, adding,

'That wretched "Women's" Examination: if it had only been Greats! No one will realise how brilliantly she has done.'

"I think, however, that notwithstanding the feminine designation of the examination, the fact that she had done so brilliantly did somehow make itself very distinctly known and felt. In spite of her still very girlish appearance and manner, no one could ever regard her now as just a wonderful child with a wonderful future before her. That future had already begun.

"We used to tell her at College that she looked like a nun, and that the dress of all others that suited her best was the religious habit of sombre black with a white band across her brow, which she once wore at a College fancy dress dance when she appeared as our patroness—Lady Margaret herself. She indeed said of herself long afterwards that she was 'distressingly meek' in those days. It was impossible but that in the new life opening before her with such countless interests and opportunities she should not lose something of this same meek and cloistered air; impossible but that she should come into her own heritage and be made aware of the powers within her, and within her reach. A certain underlying shyness and reserve she never lost, but both her outward manner and I think the expression of her face changed considerably in the next few years.

"Her conversational power needed only opportunity to prove itself. She was keen and still almost remorseless in argument, although she never lost her temper or her curious power of self-detachment, and she loved a worthy antagonist. She would return again and again to a debated point,

and had an extraordinary gift of making her meaning clear by the use of illustrations and even by paradox, but I don't think she ever fenced with words for the mere love of fencing, or laid herself open to the charge of defending 'ten impossible propositions before breakfast,' as some of her family really might be accused of doing. Her written style was terse—too terse and condensed indeed for her letters to give entire satisfaction, at that time, to those who longed for them; though it matured and mellowed considerably as she got older. But the terseness had a dry, pungent flavour of its own; a something of the brevity which is the soul of wit. 'But if my letters are too short and tell you nothing,' she writes, 'it's a sign that I'm a dull person and can do no better. And if I can do no better, then it's not my fault, but I'll try all the same to improve. Which sounds like Beth's argument when somebody said that one of the babies squinted, which was—(1) that he didn't squint, (2) that all babies squinted, (3) that he would get over it.'

"Her face, too, became more mobile and expressive in these years; the keen humour and quick intellect betrayed themselves more and more in the play of eye and lip. Her eyes indeed never lost their quality of earnestness and purpose, but this was often now intermingled with lighter moods—especially a kind of half-tender, half-teasing mockery, which indeed had its counterpart in her nature.

"I did not see a great deal of her or for long at a time for a year or two after she left College; but she wrote often, and I gathered something and inferred a great deal more about herself and her life from her brief epistles."

At the age of twenty-one, then, Maggie said goodbye to Oxford. I do not trace any particular sadness about her farewells. She had made great friendships, and indeed perhaps felt, with her sense of responsibility about her relationships, that she had as many people on her hands as she could well manage. Then, too, she felt that her family were committed to a great adventure in the world, and she desired to be with them. She had missed her mother and her sister very much, and had felt at times as if her place was with them. She had, indeed, proposed to finish her Oxford course a year before, without taking her final examination.

In truth, she was interested in real life even more than in academic study. Her own religion, and her philosophy as well, were not things to be enjoyed apart, in which she could isolate herself, but ideas to be worked into life. She had partly got over her old diffidence, and had found that she could make friends and keep them, play a part, hold her own with others, and though from henceforth she had her own quiet background of thought and art, it was always subordinated to real life, and made to minister to it and enrich it.

In these years I was little at home. I had gone to Eton as a master in 1885, and my work had increased rapidly. In the holidays I often travelled and paid visits, and thus fell somewhat out of the home current. In the summer, we usually all went together to Switzerland, but while Nelly was a very active mountaineer, Maggie could never do much in the way of walking. In 1885, we had a singular adventure at Zermatt; on arriving there, Maggie was taken ill, and was found to be suffering from

scarlet fever. The hotel-keeper, Seiler, was told. Maggie was moved to a secluded wing, which was isolated by carbolic sheets; Nelly devoted her holiday to nursing, and I think rather enjoyed it. I remember the amazement of the little Swiss nurse, when Maggie became convalescent, and the two girls, to get exercise, fitted up a sort of badminton court, and played a game with hair-brushes as bats.

As a rule, she spent much of her time in Switzerland in reading and drawing; walking did not suit her, and she became troubled by stiffness in her limbs, which ultimately proved to be a threatening of arthritis. At this time, however, she took her ailments very serenely, and did not allow them to interfere with her work.

There are fewer letters of this date because she was living at home and discussing everything in heaven and earth with her mother and sister, though she kept up her correspondence with friends. The letters I have are mostly written on visits.

One pleasant feature of the life was the constant presence of the chaplains, who acted as secretaries and ecclesiastical *aides-de-camp*. They had their own rooms, but lived as members of the household with us, joining in anything that was going forward. Maggie could never live at close quarters with people without desiring to understand their point of view, and though she was always at her best in a *tête-à-tête*, she was often consulted by them on small problems which arose; and all this time was gaining an easier touch with people generally, her old diffidence giving place to an eager and intelligent sympathy, always lit up by touches of irony, and by her quick eye for

modes of thought and mannerisms, and even foibles, so that she could give, as I often found myself, a personal touch to her arguments which revealed how closely one had been studied and observed.

These few years, then, from 1886 to 1890, were an interesting and delightful time for her. No one could be morbid or haunted or unduly fanciful in Nelly's company; her humour and common-sense, and a power of almost complimentary ridicule, swept cobwebs away very swiftly. Maggie wrote and reflected much, did much careful painting, went out in London, stayed with friends, and though she never flung herself unasked into intimacies, yet she held the threads of many deep friendships in her hands, and then as always felt a strong sense of responsibility about friends, and a great desire to be useful and to give her best, to advise and cheer and sustain, none of it roughly or summarily, but with a gentle touch and a fine understanding of temperament. She painted my portrait about this time, and I well remember her astonishing patience about it, her readiness to continue or to desist exactly as I wished or did not wish.

(*To her Mother.*)

Addington Park.
(1887.)

My Dearest Mother,

We had a most successful journey yesterday. Hugh was quite well all the way and feasted on pears and sponge cake and a large amount of tea at various stations. We had our carriage mostly to ourselves—except for one quiet gentleman.

Hugh composed parodies on Macaulay most of the way down. I found he had intentions of his own about reading Macaulay's history.

. . . . .

Macaulay seems to be good for Hugh. He is interrupting my letter by asking a series of questions about Habeas Corpus and the National debt and so forth.

. . . . .

(*To a Friend.*)

Hotel Belle Vue,
Mentone.
(1887.)

. . . . .

The place is most lovely—looking over the Mediterranean with gardens with palms and orange-trees in front, and a wood of olives at the back—and the town is beautiful, too. Carnival was going on yesterday, and I went into the streets a little—and got thoroughly pelted in the course of the afternoon ; some of the things were rather jolly—a gigantic car with people dressed like cats sitting on it—pelting everyone as they went along, right into the windows of the houses, too.

Do write to me some time, if you have time—for a wonder I am not very happy just now—and as that is a tolerably rare occurrence, I don't suppose I bear it with the heroism that might be expected.

How are you getting on ? do tell me. I hope you have got more used to it again now, and don't mind it so much.

. . . . .

(*To a Friend.*)

The Lodge,
Marlborough College.
(1887.)

. . . . . .

Thanks much for your story which I will return as soon as I get home. I hope you haven't wanted it before, but you might have written if you had.

I think in some points it's distinctly good, and I think, too, it's a pity that you should write melodrama before you try to write stories seriously. I was amused at the abrupt way in which you cut the knot. If you have written any other stories, do let me read them. What is your pamphlet on Women's Education called, and where can I get it? I remember you told me with sternness that I needn't think it would be presented to me.

. . . . . .

This place is so nice—it's my brother's last term here, so that we are staying here for Sunday. Don't you like staying with people you don't know at all? I do, because I feel quite a different person—and generally a nicer person.

. . . . . .

(*To a Friend.*)

Addington Park,
Croydon.
(1888.)

. . . . . .

I hadn't meant to be bitter, *really*. I only put it so strongly partly to show you forcibly—(and I am afraid it was rather too forcible) that I hadn't sprung my own imaginations upon you, but only accepted too readily what you said. I know I am

always doing that sort of thing. Ruth told me once she was sure I should believe it if she said she had committed a murder.

(*To her brother Arthur.*)

Addington Park,
Croydon.
(1888.)

. . . . .

I have been arranging with the Headmistress of the High School here to teach logic next term. She appears to have a great theory of "everybody doing some work in the world" so she is intensely amiable to me—so amiable that I am beginning to have fearful misgivings—more especially as I find it more difficult than I expected to write logic lectures which people will understand who don't know logic already.

. . . . .

She and Hugh went with Sir John and Lady Fowler, whose son, now Sir Montague Fowler, was my father's chaplain, to see the Forth Bridge, and then in their yacht up to Ross-shire. She writes—

(*To her Mother.*)

Great Western Hotel,
Oban.
Thursday. (1888.)

DEAREST MOTHER,

As Sir John sent you a telegram from Edinburgh, I didn't think it necessary to write. We have been having great fun. We stayed at his house at the Forth on Tuesday night and on Wednesday started by going all over the Forth Bridge—right up to the top in a cage, and about from pier to pier

of the bridge in a steam launch. Then we went on the steamer on to Stirling, saw the town and castle there, and on here, where we arrived about 10 at night. We go on the yacht this afternoon round Skye, and get to Loch Broom on Saturday afternoon. These details are all infused with the spirit of the scene—I wonder I haven't got the very style. We make jokes at such a rate and have such chaffs. Hugh is flourishing and awfully jolly and happy. I am very glad you are coming on Tuesday, though I did really enjoy yesterday a great deal—but I can't be "lively and sought after" like some of the guests. It is nice, however, I do really think, and they are all of them awfully kind. We shan't get much Greek or German done before you come. There is only Monday and Tuesday to do it in.

Your loving daughter,
MARGARET BENSON.

(*To Miss Gent* [*Mrs. Lea*].)

Bamborough Castle,
Northumberland.
(1888.)

. . . . .

This is a perfectly delicious place on the sea—with everything which a seaside place ought to have—good bathing namely, and a beach quiet enough for one to behave in an idiotic and childish manner. It's a *lovely* place for sketching, too.

. . . . .

Nellie and I are making spasmodic attempts to learn to swim; it comforts me that she is as great a coward as I—and more still that my youngest brother, who is a worse coward than either of us—

has managed to learn to swim somehow—so there's hope for me still.

. . . . . .

I know you will think this a very dull letter—but can a thistle bring forth figs ?

(*To Miss Gent.*)

Addington Park.
(1888.)

. . .

That puppy is too charming for words. I have got a little cat who sits with him upon my chimney-piece. The cat looks simply contemptuous, the puppy beseeching, but a cock (of the same make) stands behind and blesses the union. Tell me who to call them after. I think that is such a nice plan.

. . . . . .

(*To a Friend.*)

Addington Park,
Croydon.
(1888.)

. . . . . .

I was very glad to get your letter last night. If you really feel that for yourself life is no longer worth living, try to make your life worth living for someone else, or for some other end. Again, you said in the garden that religion and duty were the only safeguards. Here I agree with you too,—I think they are the only permanent safeguards, though for the time other things may serve ; but as for saying that you have not got these,—as if that made the case hopeless—that I think is altogether an untrue way of putting it. If you feel you want—need—these things, that at any rate is the first step to getting them.

I want you to do two things only at present, and they are not very difficult. You don't believe perhaps enough to pray—so I want you, instead of that, to take two or three minutes in the morning to think about the day, just with the intention, not to make yourself happy—that you say and believe is impossible just now—but to do what you feel would be most worth while doing, among the ordinary things of daily life, I mean,—what you would do ordinarily if you had taken duty rather than feeling as your standard. And the second thing is to read daily also one of the gospels,—St. Luke's, I think—for a certain set time, a quarter of an hour perhaps, with attention. If you don't believe the historical facts, it doesn't matter—it is the teaching which I want you to think of, independently of the question as to who was the real author of it.

I don't expect this to make you at once either to feel pleasure in what you do—that would merely be aiming at feeling of a different kind—or to believe instantly in the historical part of the gospel, for if that was quick it would hardly be safe—but I don't think if you read you can help gradually coming to believing in the teaching as giving you some standing-ground outside mere feeling.

Don't think I am hard on you in things I say—you know that if I were, I shouldn't be writing to you like this.

. . . . .

I want you to fix these times for yourself, but to keep to them, when they are fixed, quite rigidly for a month. Don't read quickly—read as you would a book quite new to you—write out a summary

of points, if that helps you, or analyse it as you would with a book which you wanted really to study. I mean take any way—you probably know what way is best for yourself—which gives you the most real grasp of it.

. . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

Preen Manor,
Shrewsbury.
(1888.)

. . . . .

I wish there was a good deal *more* of me—Miss Wordsworth recommended a plan in one Bible Class for supplementing your character—and that was somehow to get the supplement from your friends. I don't see how to do it, not being naturally a vampire.

. . . . .

Maggie was now beginning to go about a good deal, both with Nellie and alone, and to pay country-house visits. I went with her several times on such occasions. It was always a rather serious business with her. Her shyness lay very deep, and she was diffident about taking the initiative or starting conversation. But this was by no means apparent, for she always had a serene and smiling air, and seemed easy to please. Her spirits rose, as she became used to a circle, and her talk was then eager and animated, with incisive flashes, which contrasted charmingly with her gentleness of demeanour; while her sympathy, her interest in variety of temperament, and her desire to understand another's point of view, rather than to advance her own, made her a most attractive companion.

CARLISLE

(*To her Mother.*)

Rose Castle,
Carlisle.
(1888.)

My Dearest Mother,

Reams wouldn't contain all I have to say to you—however most of it I shall be able to say verbatim. K—— like Canon Hole—" warmed up and made herself uncommon pleasant." I went out riding with her once or twice. After we had well started—I on her horse—she told me that the horse was by way of giving one tremendous kick. I expected to be laid full length, but somehow the kick didn't come off. (Nellie is talking all the time). Nellie's visit I was very glad of—she made K—— talk on friendship—what love really *is*, you know. *I* should never have done it by myself, but I am glad it's done, especially as K—— felt uncomfortable; that is rather good for her—she said she was afraid I thought her idea of friendship low! I said (for we had had rather a fierce discussion) that I thought she made more out of her kind of friendships—of the good-fellowship sort—than I should, but I didn't think it came to as much as the other. She said also she was low because she thought that as she hadn't the same idea of friendship as I had, it would make the friendship between us less than it would be otherwise. That was awkward—but it was possible to make matters clearer. I said that if we were going to be real friends, it wouldn't much matter whether she had the idea beforehand or not—and that any amount of having the idea wouldn't make it come off.

I am sorry this is so incoherent, but Nellie has been talking to me and warbling at intervals. We

had a tiring journey yesterday—partly I had been sitting up with K——, but also we couldn't get much to eat on the way—our last attempt resulted in pieces of ham and bread in paper bags !

I am simply in love with this place, and more than half inclined to be so with Miss Goodwin, only I can't find anything to say to her. I am making resolutions to go about the garden more at home—I don't think it would need more than a general interest. Don't say you don't think I shall do it.

I am getting so awfully interested in what I am writing that I want you to read it. Also I feel this, that altogether one has been so much used to the idea of the divinity of Christ as to have overlooked the humanity, I think partly from the dread of being too material. Just as—what is really the same thing—from the fear of having not a sufficiently pure love of goodness for its own sake, I have missed out the personal element in thinking about God. I don't think I can go on—because Nellie has come up again. What I rather feel is that I have been taking things the wrong way round for so long, and have therefore come to a complete stop—and that if I could look at it the other way round it might make possible what seems so entirely impossible now.

This must be awfully confused, but I think you may understand it, and I am rather afraid of talking for fear that this idea might perhaps—not go away from me, for I think it's true—but cease to be living to me.

Your loving daughter,

MARGARET BENSON.

Please give my best love to Papa.

(*To her brother Hugh.*)

Addington Park,
Croydon.
(1888.)

DEAREST HUGH,

What a noble, self-denying boy you are! When I heard your message * about that picture I covered my face with my hands and burst into a torrent of irrepressible tears mingled with incoherent words of gratitude and astonishment. In fact, whenever I think of the extent of your noble sacrifice, emotion so completely overcomes me that I doubt if I shall ever be able to set to work at that picture.

By the way Herkomer is coming to paint Papa. Shall I ask him to toss you off a few trifles by the way? Of course they wouldn't be as good as mine, but they might do for wall-furniture so to speak—to cover any holes in your paper.

I think that is all I have got to say. I couldn't refrain from putting pen to paper to thank you.

Your loving sister,

M. B.

(*To her brother Hugh.*)

Addington Park,
Croydon.
(1888.)

DEAREST HUGH,

Many happery Turns of the day. I haven't got you a "pressink" yet—but if I can (or you can) think of a suitable one I will get it.

* Hugh had said that he wished Maggie to paint him a picture for his room at Eton, but that if she had not time, it might be deferred.

Truro was splendid—but why weren't you there to carry Papa's train? He had two train-bearers in *scarlet* cassocks and skull caps, and surplices. Punch had consequently a paragraph on Scarletina at Truro. Nothing particular has happened since. It is simply disgustingly cold, and yesterday was so foggy that Papa and Mama took $3\frac{1}{2}$ hours driving down from London, a man walking with a lantern before the horses most of the way. I lost my way in Croydon and had to inquire at a house. I was afraid of going round and round like Lucy Gray.

Au revoir,

Yours,

M. B.

(*To her brother Hugh.*)

Lambeth Palace, S.E
(1888.)

. . . . . .

As I well know what exquisite agony it was to you last term "not to be able to write to me" (as you said) because I hadn't written to you often enough, I think I had better begin early in the term.

. . . . . .

Nellie made an awful random remark about one of the speeches. She said it was like a stew made out of meat which had been already served up on the joint!!!! She wasn't ashamed to write that remark down on paper and pass it to me during the meeting.

. . . . . .

(*To her brother Hugh.*)

Lambeth Palace, S.E.
(1888.)

. . . . .

We had a Queen at our last garden-party we had, and as Mar and Par were both ordered down to Windsor to dine with the other Queen (of England I mean)—we are so sought after by the Royal Family—Nellie and I had to entertain the first queen, who was from Hawaii. She had an interpreter, who told her that Wiclif was the first Archbishop—and stopped her by a nod when she wanted to put her sponge cake in her tea. She and her sister-in-law got awfully excited when they saw a train out of the window.

Your kind master Dr. Warre dined here a few days ago. I asked him if you were a good boy.

. . . . . .

(*To her brother Hugh.*)

Riffel Alp.

DEAREST HUGH,

I have intended to write to you ever since we have been here—why I have not done so I have not now time further to particularise (as Nellie and I used to say in our historical essays of any fact we had forgotten).

Nellie and Fred have started off to the Rothhorn in such fig! My! You should have seen them. They are to get photographed at Zermatt when they come down. Yesterday it was discovered that the soles of Fred's shoes were more or less worn through,

also the side of the heel, and a large hole at the toe, and another which looked as if he had put his ice-axe through it at the side, (not to mention minor matters)—so we had to take them to be mended (?) and this morning they were delayed until the boots (the prettiest little boots in the family) came back so patched that there was hardly a thread to identify them with the old boots. Still he looked very professional, and so did Nellie, though just at present that beaming countenance is more healthy than beautiful, as her nose is of a lively orange hue from the burning on the Breithorn. Mama and I accompanied them to the door and in a sort of triumphal procession down the hill. Mama wanted to commend her to the guide, so she besought me to say in German "take care of her." I didn't know what it was and didn't wish to think, so she did it by tragic gestures and the two words "Sorgen Sie" which she remembered as we were going down the hill.

. . . . .

(*To her brother Hugh.*)

Lambeth Palace, S.E.
(1888.)

. . . . .

Are you going to bring the fox home? Beth wants "your Mama to write and tell him he mustn't have it. Foxes are so sly and it will be sure to kill him when it gets older."

I have begun animal painting. I mean having lessons in it. I have a dog about the size of a donkey to sit to me. So heavy that when Mr. Nettleship

(the man who teaches me) and his master try to tug him into the right position, they rise exhausted from the vain effort.

We had a great cricket match here the other day of girls—two elevens. One of the Talbots brought an 11 against us—they came cocksure that they were going to win. We "beat them" with 3 wickets to go down. Four of the Talbots played—4 others looked on, including Mr. Talbot (who came out of the Diocesan Conference which was going on in the library) and Mrs. Talbot. They all got sadder and sadder and some of them crosser and crosser. They have been still further humiliated since then. The Prodigy * of three years old, dear little tot, only got 7 runs in the first innings in the Eton and Harrow Match, caught out 2nd ball in the second innings, and missed a splendid catch.

. . . . .

(*To her brother Hugh.*)

Lambeth Palace, S.E.
(1888.)

. . . . .

We *are* all jubilant here.† It is simply glorious.

. . . . .

Dr. Warre has sent the poem up for us to see so I am going to read it—as ahem! you didn't let *me* see it before you sent it in although I hear you read it to Beth—but I am not feeling at all jealous—oh no!

. . . . . .

* Hugh always maintained that one of the Talbot boys, younger than himself, was constantly held up to him as a prodigy of excellence in all respects.

† Hugh had just won the prize for an English poem at Eton.

(*To her brother Hugh.*)

Addington Park,
Croydon.

. . . . . .

I have meant many times to write, but the days slip by like jelly or like that bacon of which it was said "you puts it into your mouth and you think you has it, and my! ain't it wanished."

. . . . . .

I have been painting Watch again. He doesn't appreciate it. I supply him with minute bits of biscuit for which he is mildly grateful, until he gets too cross. He lies chiefly with his head away from me—he goes to sleep and rolls backwards off the bench on which I put him, with an intensely injured face—he behaves generally in an irritating manner.

Fred has gone to Braemore. He intends to shoot a royal. I asked him to give me the head but he wouldn't promise, wasn't it selfish?

. . . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

Truro.
(1889.)

. . . . . .

Yesterday was very nice—E——'s children *are* jolly and so well brought up. Those little boys of 4 and 5 handed things at tea in a way which would have set an example to Fred and Hugh—and her baby is most jolly—eleven months old—it crawled about the floor making straight, with the most engaging confidence, to anybody who was eating cake—then it went and played the piano. E—— was as idyllic as ever. By the way, Miss Hedley

can't keep me after Monday—so I go to the Cornishes till Thursday—after that if you really want me to stay, Nellie Hill asked me to go there and might be able to take me then, if Salisbury is at all on the way home. But consider that a Bishop's trial doesn't come every year—and there isn't even a conference or a Jubilee this summer.

. . . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

Truro.
(1889.)

. . . . . .

Do you know I can't help rather liking Miss B——. I think from all accounts—and from certain facts that seem to verify it she has some ground for her views about the state of the school. It seems they got awfully lax—and crammed tremendous also—the last part of the time. Her views are not extreme about examinations either. I should like to shake and to slap her at times—I should also like to take away all her adoring friends—and I always want to disagree with her—but after that she is not so bad. I like F—— much better than I ever thought I should, but one is always deceived when people are ill.

(*To her Mother, on a visit.*)

(1889.)

. . . . . .

Mr. A—— is very melancholy and very angry. It was rather appalling at dinner last night—all the guests had gone—but Jack, who has been

taking Kate's part, was there. Jane wouldn't speak either to Kate or to him. Mr. A—— was angry with him and would hardly speak to Kate. Kate was very low and hardly spoke to anybody—You can imagine what it was like !

. . . . .

(*To her brother Arthur.*)

Strangways Terrace,
Truro.
(March 9, 1889.)

. . . . .

I have quite made up my mind I shall never go over to the Church of Rome if the ceremonies are at all like High Church Ritual in England. The prostrations of some of the clergy at the Cathedral are quite too much for me. But fancy that being possible in a place like this—when it was said " that there was no need to go to Rome, because Rome was coming to us " when we had candles to give light in the choir at Kenwyn.

. . . . .

(*To a Friend.*)

Addington.
(1889.)

. . . . .

My logic girls did their examinations so nicely—I felt inclined to kiss them all round. The only irritating part was that the girl who had worked worst in the term did the best paper, so I tried to ease my mind by scolding her and giving her a very bad mark for term's work. I am haunted now,

however, by a fear that they did so well only because I gave them much too easy a paper.

. . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

Hill Side,
Chesterton Road,
Cambridge.
June 6th (1890).

DEAREST MOTHER,

I arrived here all safely last night. I hadn't time for the King's Cross train so I went straight to Liverpool Street and it brought me here exactly at the right time. I hate what I call presence of mind. Fred came to dinner. He is awfully nervous about his Tripos, and thinks that every remark everyone makes has a meaning in it. Then we went out to an evening party, which was great fun, at St. John's.

However I shall see you on Saturday. I wrote (Greek aorist—does not exclude the fact that the writing is done at the present time) this because I thought you might otherwise imagine that I had a fainting fit in the train which ended in syncope and death.

Would you mind asking Nellie for Long's address because I am writing to tell him to come on Monday. It's important and concerns my future fame, he being the picture framer.

Your lovingest daughter,
MARGARET BENSON.

There will be eleven Moral Science Examiners at dinner this evening. Your preserver among the rest.

(To her Mother.)

(1890.)

My Dearest Mother,

There is something I want very much to write about. I had a long talk to B—— the other day about the principle of her not talking to me about certain things because I was young in my mind—she *feels* strongly against it, as you know, and as you do, but couldn't defend it much, and the ultimate point was that you didn't wish it—and had said so to her.

Once I did think so too, but now I don't—you know that I don't wish to know things for the mere sake of knowing them—but it does seem to me that I have reached a point, at which knowing so little as I do does really separate me from other people —B—— couldn't ultimately deny this though she did at first. Her argument was that it was much better for me not to—that it would only disgust me. I daresay it would disgust me—I'm sure I hope so—but at the same time I do feel that with her for instance I come to a deadlock now, since this cuts off from me the possibility of knowing in any thorough sort of way the problems that she (as other people) has to deal with. In so many ways we have come to a stop too. The things that are problems to me are out of her line altogether. With all this I daresay there is very little that she could tell me—would care to I mean—and as far as that goes I have nothing to do with it—and certain instincts in her which are against it I don't want to interfere with—only I should like her to feel free about it, and you see she is naturally so particularly careful.

I fear you will feel about this as you did about Nellie and C——. As you know, I don't want it for its own sake, only when you are brought near to the alternative of knowing things you don't like, or not really knowing people you do like, I don't see how it's possible to choose the latter. Of course I am very vague as to what I want to know, and it is just that I am not able to understand the questions that touch her in their real bearings that bothers me.

My writing is getting on more or less. I am just getting to Immortality, which pleases me. I am going to cut Martineau out.

We haven't come across any very nice people so far.

Please give my love to everybody and Beth.

Your lovingest daughter,

MARGARET BENSON.

Maggie became a very good horsewoman and loved riding. We had a charming little cob, called Ajax, which she used to ride, and taught to jump. Very fussy the little beast was at first, but there came a real understanding between them—and she was quite successful. Becket was a horse that pulled, and as everyone demurred to riding him, my father insisted on doing so, to show what sympathy could do. She writes to me from Lambeth—

Papa rode Becket himself! He behaved beautifully, but it wasn't quite a fair trial, because we had an empty row, and we had orders to pull up our

horses, whenever Papa wanted to stop. Still it was a good thing, and showed that Becket can't yet be guided quite "by a thread" as the groom says.

. . . . . .

(*To her brother Arthur.*)

Lambeth Palace, S.E.
Feb. 13, 1890.

. . . . . .

We were very sorry you couldn't come up to the trial * last week, it was really interesting. What pleases me most is the way in which the lawyers got pulled up by Papa. It is extraordinary how much more he knows about it than anyone else. On one point Sir Walter Phillimore was humbly taking down the names of books to refer to—and even he was far better up in the subject than Sir Horace Davey.

. . . . . .

(*To a friend.*)

Addington Park,
Croydon.
(1890.)

. . . . . .

I can't help being astonished at a man † so absolutely saintly making such a tremendous fuss about such trifles, or if he doesn't think them trifles I think his views must be horribly materialistic.

* Of the Bishop of Lincoln.
† The Bishop of Lincoln.

All the same I hope it may go in his favour—if it doesn't, I wonder what he'll do.

We had a funny week last week. On Monday I went up to London because there was to be an inspection at one of the schools of which I am Manager—and I thought the Managers would be expected to attend. When I got there I found I was the only Manager—so I was paraded over the school—listened to the examination and criticised the sewing! and rather enjoyed myself—

. . . . .

(*To her brother Arthur.*)

Lambeth Palace, S.E.

. . . . .

The K——s are staying here—Mrs. K—— fixes one with her eye and says, "How *very* sad it is" whenever the forged letters * are alluded to. Isn't it a most uncharitable view of the situation? I believe I am distinguished by being the only one of the family of whom Mrs. K—— can't find anything flattering to say. She makes an attempt always by asking me whether I am still lecturing at Croydon, and if my lectures are going to be printed—but it doesn't get any farther.

We are all rather low here—physically, not mentally however. Mama is over-tired, Papa is not well—I've had a raging cold, and Nellie is beginning another—but still nobody is depressed. What we should have been at Addington if we had stayed I can't imagine; I wish your holidays fell at the time when we were up here—Sundays especially are so much nicer.

. . . . . .

* The Parnell Letters.

CHAPTER VI

ILLNESS AND TRAVEL

THAT first happy stage of Maggie's life, opening serenely on to new interests, and with the old slowly acquired powers breaking softly into bloom, came to an end with her sister Nellie's death in the autumn of 1890. There was diphtheria in the village—it was before the days when the cure for diphtheria had been perfected. Nellie was taken ill, and sent for a doctor—my father and mother were away—the doctor said she must be isolated, and the last time Maggie saw her, except for one brief glimpse just before she died, was as she was gleefully collecting books and papers in the schoolroom ; she was going to have a few quiet days, she said, waving Maggie away to a safe distance, and she was going to work off arrears.

The illness was short and severe, and the suffering was great ; but Nellie never lost her courage : it ended in heart-failure, and she knew she was dying. She sent messages to all of us, and just before the end said with a smile to my father that she wondered what it was going to be like.

The day of Nellie's funeral was bright and autumnal, and I walked side by side with Maggie behind the coffin, through the garden, and down to

the little church. Maggie was pale and smiling through her tears, and I was conscious that there was a great tenderness about her, as if she had vowed herself to fill so far as possible, Nellie's place as daughter and sister. That, I think, was always Maggie's way. She did not think of her own loss or her own grief, though Nellie's companionship was her great support; for Nellie by her gaiety and eagerness, her freedom from shyness, her love of new people and ever multiplied relations, her overflowing spirits, had given Maggie just the sort of encouragement she most needed. But a great change like that always brought to Maggie a sense of her responsibility and duties to be done.

Nellie had always enjoyed having an understanding with others, and standing in a perfectly definite relation with them, so that when she died, we each felt that our special companion and confidante was gone. She had reflective moods, and pondered much over the part that she might play in life; but she was saved from introspection by the wide range of her interests. Her sympathies were instinctive, and she had far more power than Maggie of entering by imagination into the lives of others; this was exhibited, I used to think, in her extraordinary gift for acting and impersonation; and she would have become, I have no doubt, an excellent writer, if time had been granted her. A novel, *At Sundry Times and in Divers Manners*, which was published after her death, is full of humour and lively characterisation; and her little book *Streets and Lanes of the City*, privately printed by my father after her death, is one of the few books I know about the life of the poor which seems to

have nothing technically philanthropic about it, but is written from the point of view of a frank and equal observer. Nellie was the only one of us, I think, who had no awe of my father. She knew exactly the sort of talk and companionship that he liked, and gave him exactly the sort of open and outspoken affection for which he craved. It was Nellie's way to fall in with the moods of her companion, not diplomatically, but with a certain self-suppression, because she enjoyed giving people their head and seeing how they behaved. The singular and beautiful result of this was that in a very tender and careful little biographical study which my father wrote of her, prefixed to *Streets and Lanes of the City*, he there drew a portrait of her which to me is hardly recognisable, but which is yet obviously true, because it showed Nellie as she reflected my father's own moods. But this was all a perfectly uncalculating impulse on her part, a natural desire to be exactly what was expected of her, mingled with an intense desire that her friends should be their own natural selves in her company. She did not draw out people because she wanted to stand well with them, but because she was more interested in them than in herself, and wished them to be happy, frank, and amused. Nellie never seemed to have strong wishes of her own. " What shall we do ? " was her favourite question. Neither do I think she had consciously a strong sense of responsibility, or a wish to direct and influence others. It was a far more spontaneous and natural instinct in her, and her love was given lavishly to all who claimed her affection. I have seldom known anyone more truly unselfish, not from

deliberate self-renunciation, but out of pure eagerness and goodwill ; and it was all irradiated by a bubbling-over sense of humour, and an intense amusement in the whimsical qualities and inconsistencies and absurdities of human beings, which delighted her in spite of herself, and even when she would have wished them otherwise. She had a good deal of ill-health in her short life and much depression—the result perhaps of her activities. There was a mood in which she tended to stare fixedly before her, and to enliven proceedings with a doleful little song. But she hid her tiredness very gallantly, and it was little suspected. It was a happy temperament, full of curiosity and liveliness ; and I never saw anyone who was more fitted by nature to be a wife and a joyful mother of children. She would have played with them, sympathised with them, understood them, laughed at them and consoled them ; but this was not to be. As I think of her, I remember best her joyful greeting, her eager embrace and the firm grasp of her strong little hand, and the way in which she threw aside whatever she was doing, not reluctantly, but because she loved companionship better still.

There is something half-sustaining, I am sure, about the swift and sudden passage of an eager and vivid spirit into the unseen. If death follows a long illness, in which every power of body and mind seems gradually eclipsed, there is a temptation to feel that death may be an extinguishing of life ; but when the end comes to one whose spirit is radiant and undimmed, it is easier to think of it as a migration, a mere shifting of the scene. It was thus with Nellie, as it was with my father and

Hugh—the door opened suddenly upon their path, and they passed through in strength and not in weakness.

Nellie then was laid to rest in the quiet churchyard in the valley, beneath the steep wooded bluffs of the Park and close to the gardens and the little farm. I think that my father had expected to be buried there. Archbishops Manners-Sutton, Howley, Sumner, Longley and Tait are all buried there, and a space was left at my father's wish by Nellie's grave, where Maggie herself now sleeps.

The home life began again. But Nellie's death was like the closing of the old days of childhood for all of us. She was just twenty-seven, but she had kept alive by her freshness and childlike spirit many little family usages and games which never revived again. Till then we had always written and acted a children's play at Christmas, and there had always been a holiday magazine; but this all disappeared, and no one had the heart to revive it.

It is usual to speak of "sheltered lives" and to draw a sharp distinction between lives of external prosperity and ease, and lives of simpler stress and commoner anxieties. I believe it to be a wholly unreal distinction. All people grow very easily accustomed to the external circumstances of life, and wealth can do little to remedy them. As a matter of fact, surroundings weigh very little on the hearts of active and cheerful people. The real distinction is one of temperament, between the people who take things as they come, and live buoyantly in the day and hour, and the people who scrutinise closely themselves and those about them, anticipate anxieties, array circumstances,

feel alike a strong sense of duty and a fear of being unequal to that duty. Maggie was of the sensitive type whose life could never be sheltered or guarded. A misunderstanding, a difficult personality, a shadow of temper or irritability, a claim of sympathy or help, weighed heavily upon her ; and though her life gave her many interests and opportunities, it also multiplied duties and responsibilities. She could not lightly dismiss any appeal, and even if it were not actually made, she was inclined to fret herself over the thought that she ought to have had something to give. She had of course many resources of interest and work. But she could never peacefully abandon herself to them ! Her affections were always indicating to her new channels in which she desired that her spirit might flow. She was to be much separated from her home in the years that followed, and to gain a different outlook ; and she was never a sheltered spirit in the sense of having a self-contained stronghold in which she could live, indifferent to what was going on outside. Nellie made natural and lively response to outside voices ; but Maggie was less impelled by curiosity or inventiveness. The world was more mysterious to her, and its secrets more dim and strange. She had a stronger artistic instinct for what was beautiful, not only in art but in conduct and belief, and the possibilities of life were like an unexplored palace in a haunted domain, through which you passed half in admiration and much in awe. Neither had she the buoyancy which floated Nellie laughing past what she did not understand, and even by what she disliked. Maggie was more afraid of what might be revealed, though she desired to face the

reality of things, and she had too a strong touch of Puritan disdain for anything she thought coarse or base. Nellie wanted to amend where Maggie wanted to alter, and Nellie pitied and was even amused by what distressed and hurt Maggie to contemplate. But Maggie was saved from anything like disdain or superiority by a real and genuine humility, her sternness was mitigated by an imaginative sympathy, and she was always ready to blame herself fully as severely, if not more severely than she blamed others. She took up her new rôle, the only daughter now in a busy household with endless social claims, heavy-hearted, I think, and feeling her inadequacy, but with a constant and generous desire to do her best.

(*To Miss Gent.*)

Addington Park,
Croydon.
(1890.)

. . . . .

The end was more peaceful and beautiful than you can think.

We were allowed to see her the last morning, she was so natural . . .

(*To Miss Gent.*)

Addington Park,
Croydon.
(1890.)

. . . . .

Kitty dear, don't think of us as miserable like that. It isn't so with any of us. In some ways it seems the most beautiful and *honourable* thing that could be done—and one hasn't the feeling of death

at all—but of expanded life. It is astonishing how one realises the things one has *said*—and that there is no sting in a death like this.

. . . . .

(*To Miss Gent.*)

The Cottage,
Reigate.
(1890.)

. . . . .

Kitty dear—if you can, write me little scraps—just nothing—a word will do—but I want to feel you near now, as I know you are in heart.

. . . . .

(*To her brother Arthur.*)

Addington.
(1890.)

. . . . . .

This is just a note to begin the habit of writing again, which I don't want to leave off any more.

I can't help feeling how near one can live to people without realising altogether so much that is really of the greatest possible worth to one. Partly I have done this I think because I was so sure of Nellie—just as we didn't trouble to make up disputes because we knew that without that we should find ourselves on just the same terms as before. But this wakes one up to so much more that one is not doing and might do—and I don't want to miss drawing near to anyone through any carelessness or a continual tendency to isolate myself.

This must sound rather incomprehensible and

confused, but perhaps you will see partly what I mean.

. . . . . .

The six years which followed, up to the time of my father's death in 1896, were spent in constant journeys in search of health. The truth is that Maggie was frail to start with, and her temperament led her to throw herself eagerly and enthusiastically into everything that she did, while her sensitiveness to impressions made everything into a strain. In the first place there was her intellectual work; she had now in her mind a book relating philosophy to religion. She read and meditated much, slowly and thoroughly, and her thinking was not a poetical and suggestive dealing with interesting problems, but solid and concentrated work, systematically done, mapping out and covering all the ground methodically. She wrote and rewrote, for ever simplifying and reconsidering. Her aim was to make a book which could be understood by ordinary intelligent readers, rather than a technical thesis. Then on her first visit to Egypt she took up excavation and Egyptology, worked at Arabic and hieroglyphics, with Greek thrown in—she was always occupied with the Greek Testament in spare moments.

Moreover her friendships, very various and far-ranging, were seldom leisurely and refreshing things. She studied her friends' characteristics and modes of thought, and threw herself into their problems and difficulties, while her emotions were loyal and intense, so that she could not just make up a friendship and leave it to take care of itself. She entered enthusiastically into her friends' schemes, giving

them all the help they claimed, without desiring to impress herself on them or wanting to manage them. She kept her friends in mind, pondered much over their qualities, concerned herself about them, prayed for them; while at this time she passed through a particular emotional crisis, which affected her whole life deeply and left its mark upon her. Then too when she was at home, she threw herself into social duties, and her shyness, which was still there though not superficially visible, made the smallest occasion into something of an effort, because she gave her best and tried to establish a real relation with any stranger whom it fell to her to entertain. She never learnt the trick of easy prattle; conversation with her meant thought and feeling and sympathy.

The consequences of all this strain was a succession of physical maladies; and though she did not become hypochondriacal in the sense that she spoke much of health, yet illness became a grievous limitation, keeping her back from settled life and steady work, and she fought it by a minute attention to régime and habits. I used to think that almost the only region where she took things with a touch of over-solemnity was that of health. It was not to be wondered at, considering what she endured; and she felt, I think, that only by real care and strictness could she keep her power of work at all. The result was an almost oracular confidence in the opinions of doctors and a tendency to attach importance to the regularity of life which she had prescribed for herself.

It began with rheumatism and a threatening of arthritis. Then her heart became affected, and

there followed a serious illness which involved both throat and eyes and caused much prostration. Her ultimate breakdown was the sequel of this illness, which continued to lurk in her system, though temporarily subdued.

(*To Miss Gent.*)

Addington Park,
Croydon.

. . . . .

I know it's a long time since I wrote. We have been very busy lately. All the week before last I was up in London with Aggie Ellison,* and between her, and the baby, and the people I wanted to see, and my lessons at Croydon, there wasn't much time—and since that we have been rather in a rush down here. I didn't know before how much I liked little babies—I never had a chance as far as I remember—besides I was so dreadfully afraid of them before I got used to this one.

. . . . .

I feel as if I had dreamt about you last night. I can't remember if I really did, but don't you know the kind of sensation one has if one has vividly dreamt about anyone—for I am in that state of mind about you to-day.

. . . . .

(*To her brother Arthur.*)

Addington.

My cat has been rather ill—partly the result of second teeth—so she has had to take up her abode

* Agnes Tait, who married the Rev. J. H. Ellison.

at the farm for a few days, and now is giving herself all the airs of an invalid, she would look more interesting in the part, if she either had not spilt so much medicine on herself, or could be persuaded to clean it off.

. . . . .

Do you remember my writing to Ruskin about a year and a half ago for an autograph for Papa—he never answered, and I was dreadfully afraid I had offended him by asking. But Miss Baynes who has just come from there said he told her that I had asked for a photograph, but he wasn't going to send it because he was so ugly. However on persuasion he chose out one, and wrote his name on it and sent it to me by Miss Baynes—I am very glad.

. . . . .

(*To Miss Gent.*)

Addington Park.
(1891.)

. . . . .

Herkomer came on Tuesday to paint my father's portrait, and let us watch him paint it all Tuesday and Wednesday. But coming in to see progress on Thursday morning we were met by a fiery exclamation that *no* man—he didn't care who—could paint in such a bad light. It was like an earthquake, and he was in a tremendous state of mind ; however he had given us fair warning before he started that the light might prove too bad—so finally he has to give it up till next February when we shall be at Lambeth, which has higher windows and better lights. I don't know whether I should quite like

to be a genius—it must be so agonising when you can't do what you want to—at least he appeared to find it so. He is such a very interesting man. I very much hope he will find he can do it at Lambeth and not want studio light, because it *is* interesting seeing it done.

. . . . . .

(*To her brother Hugh.*)

Lambeth Palace.

. . . . . .

I have been painting a house in the style of
Van Eyck.
Meissonier.
Alma Tadema, etc.,
at least my studio person says he is teaching me in the right method, of which these people are examples. At present I doubt if it would do credit to Meissonier. It is a red house, but to the artistic eye displays all the colours of the rainbow.

Nothing happens worth recording here.

. . . . . .

(*To Miss Gent.*)

Lambeth Palace.
Thursday.

. . . . . .

My mother wanted me to thank you for the flowers you sent her ; I think she would have written to you long ago if she hadn't thought I was going to write. But I hope you inferred it was my fault not hers. You want to know what I am doing still ? very well. All this morning I have been seeing Herkomer painting. He is very well satisfied with it himself this time—I think it will be a very fine

painting, though we aren't thoroughly satisfied with his view of my father's character—I am sure he thinks him contemplative rather than active, which is a mistake. This afternoon the painting went on for some time, but it was chiefly background . . .

. . . . .

Friday.

The time now has begun to go horribly quickly. Sunrise and sunset appear to be consecutive. We are going to the Drawing Room on Friday, so you may think of me with feathers in my hair from two to four—I have chosen the loveliest dress. Half of it is green but the other half is like a field full of flowers something between Edelweiss and daisies with cobwebs spun round them. I have had heart-searchings about the price, but I think on the whole the encouragement to art justifies me. I must go down and see the painting. Herkomer is not a human being. He *can't* do nothing. He and Burnand are writing a comic opera, he doing the music. He has just finished an opera which his students are to act in a theatre of his own making! Did you ever hear of such a man—I don't consider it fair play to have people like that in the world . . .

. . . . .

My dear child, it wouldn't be the least bit of use if I were to tell you what to do—even if I could, which I can't—and even if I wanted to—which I don't—I should be very sorry if we got into that relation . . .

. . . . .

I liked your story, but you have such a tragic mind!

. . . . .

(To Miss Gent.)

Hotel Beau Site,
Aix-les-Bains.

. . . . . .

I have never been in Antwerp or anywhere in Holland or Belgium so I am still in the benighted state about Rubens' pictures. But I know Nellie felt, just as you do, when she went two or three years ago, a complete reversal of all her previous ideas on the subject. I sympathise with you a good deal on the subject of Roman Catholicism, except that I have rather a weakness for Confessionals myself—but the point I always feel unsurmountable is the place of the Virgin in worship. Here one doesn't see Roman Catholicism to the best advantage. We went into the Church the other day, and the whole thing was so irreverent and so slovenly.

. . . . . .

As to other things here—most of the treatment is very nice—douches of warm water and massage 4 times a week in the early morning—twice a week special treatment with sulphurous vapour—that's horrid, and water—(tolerably horrid too)—to drink in the middle of the morning.

The doctor here says my rheumatism is " really a bad kind "—so that I can't possibly be cured this year. It will be checked this year, improved next (if I come) and ought to be cured the third year. I expect I shall go on with the cure. You needn't distress yourself by thinking that it at all matters to me. It isn't painful—even all this treatment doesn't do more than make me feel mildly rheumatic—neither does it at all endanger life—the only

thing is that I suppose it would be crippling if it spread, and it will spread, unless it's looked after.

This place is almost the loveliest I have ever seen. One doesn't of course feel very sprightly, because that isn't the effect of the cure—but it's nice. I assure you the porters are not at all rough, but lift one into bed and tuck one up in the most tender way if a maid doesn't happen to be about—I've abandoned all sense of conventional usages, as you see, since I've been here.

. . . . . .

(*To her brother Hugh.*)

Hotel Beau Site,
Aix-les-Bains.
May 18th.

My Dearest Hugh,

It was all very well to say in a grand way that I didn't expect you to write—but it would perhaps have been more impressive if I had written myself at all. So here goes.

It's rather nice here, except being boiled in the morning, literally boiled, and drinking rotten-egg water at mid-day. Yesterday we went to a most delicious place, overhanging the lake, but the only thing you are told about it beforehand is that you can get scones, and two kinds of jam. Don't you think that people always get greedier abroad? What would Miss A—— be like abroad?

F—— has been sitting in my room reading some animal stories I have written, and it was rather trying, for they were meant to be amusing, and she did not smile from beginning to end. Then she said, "I don't think they are dull."

. . . . . .

Some of her friends travelled with her at various times, or met her at places at which she stayed, or went out to her. The light in which Maggie was regarded by them is best shown by the following letter from a friend whom my mother invited to accompany her a year or two later :—

(*To Mrs. Benson.*)

. . . . . .

I can't tell you with what happiness I accept. I could almost wish that it were not so great a joy to me, that I could prove my love for Maggie more. But I will do everything I can for her and for you—only I *never* can do enough.

I have written to you in absolute certainty of being able to go—because practically I *am* certain. But I think you know I am engaged . . . and I feel I should like to tell "——" all about it before I absolutely say it is all decided. It is only a form, because he will love me to be with Maggie, and we have quite settled that he can never be more than second to her! but I have a feeling that I should like to go through the form of telling him and having his answer before I quite tell myself that it is certainly settled.

. . . . . .

A friend writes—

"In the year 1891 I went to Aix-les-Bains with her for a fortnight; and here I noticed many changes, many developments in her, the extent of which I had only partly guessed before. She seemed years older, more sure of herself, broader

in all her views of life. She had seen much, learnt much and done much since the days when purely intellectual studies had occupied so much of her time. Above all, she had met and knew some of the most interesting men and women of the age. I used to accuse her, when I first knew her, of 'having everything she could wish for'; and at the time it really seemed so to me, and she herself used laughingly to admit it. But this I could no longer say, for one great trouble had already befallen her, and the shadow of another threatened, though at present it was but a shadow and a faint one. She had lost her sister in the previous year. I did not see her until some months afterwards, and her brief letters told me only, by their brevity, how keen and deep a trouble it was, and how bravely she was bearing it. The other trouble which I have called a shadow, was her health. The rheumatism from which she suffered was a tiresome check to her plans, but it gave her no actual pain, and seemed likely to yield to treatment: she called it merely a good excuse for dropping out of society and getting on with her real work. This 'real work' included a book on Political Economy which she was writing, and which she discussed at length with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who happened to be at Aix at the same time; and in the intervals she was reading Hegel for the book on philosophy and religion which she meant to publish some day. Meanwhile, her painting, too, included now not only the exquisite water-colour sketches which Ruskin so admired, but some extraordinarily clever studies in oils of the animals she knew and loved and understood so well. Nor

had she dropped more human interests. She had kept in touch with many of her old friends, and was constantly making new ones. People (even strangers) still loved to confide in her, but I think she did not bear with them quite so gladly as in the days of her 'distressing meekness.' She could and did enlighten the morbid as to their deadly condition: 'If you haven't made a place in the world for yourself, and if it's true that no one wants you or cares for you—whose fault is that?'

She and I resumed our old game of telling each other stories of what we meant to be and do in the future; but sometimes she would stop short in the middle of hers and say with a kind of dismay—'But if I paint all the pictures I want to paint, I shall never have time to write all the books I want to write; and if I write all I want to write, when shall I be able to paint? And if I make all the friends I'd like to make, and if I go on with my lectures and social work, I shan't have time for anything else at all!'

We were sitting together in the darkness at one of the windows of the Beau-site Hotel, watching some rather feeble and fitful fireworks against the deep blue of the woods at night on the hills opposite, and she threw out her arms with a gesture unusual in her, exclaiming, 'Oh, I should like to fill all the world, and let all the world fill me!'

She loved colour and light, as her sketches show, and liked to sit silent looking at a landscape even when she did not paint it. Sometimes she would stop and say, 'Let us come here to-morrow, and I'll paint that. I want to save up the impression of that to remember in moments of depression!'

She still loved to discuss character, and gave me a special list of her friends which I was to keep for future reference, as she would want to record her progress with them and keep me informed about them. She gave me the plots of several stories too, which I was to write for her, naming all the people, and sketching situations and conversations for me to work out.

In her letters after I left her, she alludes constantly to this 'List,' and to the stories about which we were collaborating. 'Send me what you have written of "Silas and Kitty" by return—I simply love Silas and his colds in the head. But I don't feel as if I knew exactly what Kitty looks like —Hazel eyes, please, and brown hair, and she is always blushing at the wrong time, etc.' 'Yes, you've got quite the right idea: it wasn't the having to give all the love that she minded—it was his complacent acceptance of it as his right.'

She had already written one or two stories in conjunction with her sister, had planned some others, and some day (if only there was time) she meant of course to write a novel; but just at present she was busy with other things, and fiction could wait a while. All the same, she took the keenest interest in all that her brothers were doing, and would always break off anything she herself was working at if they made any call upon her. She read their MSS., made frequent suggestions, and entered into the questions they raised with eager enthusiasm. The character and situations of their books were as real to her as any of her own invention. With all the changes that I saw in

Maggie at this time, the two impressions I had first received of her remained unimpaired.

With all the broadening of her views of life and the clamour of interests within her—religion still remained the real mainspring of action; and her home remained the real dwelling-place of her heart."

(*To her Mother.*)

Palace Hotel,
Edinburgh.
(1892.)

. . . . . .

Oh Mother, I do miss you so dreadfully already—and feel as if I had suddenly become quite alone in the world—and that backgrounds are *backgrounds.*

. . . . . .

I shall write and tell you what I mean by dissatisfaction—because I want to particularly. It is *not* the same either as humility or aspiration—I wish it were.

. . . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

Hotel Beau Site,
Aix-les-Bains.
(1892.)

. . .

Please realise that this is the first possible moment I could write—when probably you haven't begun breakfast at home,—oh *would I* get up so late! we had a perfect journey—hardly a ripple on the sea, and everything shining. I hardly read anything at all the whole way here. On the boat

people were even eating sandwiches, and everyone was walking about—a horribly British party romping up and down in pairs. I made friends over the tea-basket with one woman, whom I have been travelling with ever since. I can't think who she is—she had a rug with a monogram and a coronet on it (that last is why I made friends with her). She read my name off my luggage, I suppose, and addressed me by it familiarly, and enquired if I was any relation of the Shropshire Bensons, etc. Then she wanted me to drive across Paris with her—mercifully the carriages were too small for all of us—then she entreated me to come into her carriage while my Cook's man was finding a place for me, and finally bundled into mine as the train was going off. She was very amiable, however, and insisted on shading my side of the lamp—in opposition to two cross Frenchwomen—in consequence of which I went heavily to sleep at 9, and was finally waked by my friend about 6 next morning—because she thought we were getting to Aix some time before Culoz. She is coming to call on me this afternoon : thank goodness she goes to Turin to-morrow—she is the sort of person who spends her first afternoon in going round to all the hotels to see the Visitors' Book—and then complains that she doesn't like Aix because it's too fashionable.

I do love this place—in spite of everything—and I am really glad to be here. I am going to think a very great deal. I did it so hard all yesterday, when I wasn't sleeping, that the journey seemed to shut up like a telescope. Everything is looking lovely, though the trees are backward—acacias hardly in leaf—and there is snow on the

Dent du Chat range; but my friend tells me lilies of the valley will probably be out—they grow wild. There is a railway up to Mouxy—I want to go to the top of the Revard, and find wild orchids.

. . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

Aix.
(1892.)

. . . . .

The doctor greeted me in his own bright, encouraging way—by saying he had been reading a pamphlet by a big Paris doctor on my kind of rheumatism, "Et c'est désespérant de voir ses conclusions," but while I was reviewing the whole of the rest of my life as a hopeless cripple, it turned out that he only meant it was necessary sometimes to continue for 6 or 7 years. I really will apologise very much if that turns out to be the case, though I am rather relieved by it personally—for it evidently is in the nature of the thing that my rheumatism shouldn't yet have gone. He won't think anything of my hands.

It's horrid to think of you all in that nasty, grubby, smoky, bustling place. Oh, I think I have found my vocation—I will tell you about it next time. Uncle Henry must be asked about it.

. . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

Aix-les-Bains,
May 13th (1892).

. . . . .

I get plenty of solitude. To-day I am going out with the others—but yesterday I only saw them

at meals and a little after meals—I do lots of Hegel —I have begun the Religious Philosophy, too. That is where I see the vocation. I do want to know badly—and perhaps Uncle Henry could tell me (1) if the Philosophy of Religion has been translated, (2) if not, and one began to translate it, how could one be sure that half way through some one would not cut in with a ready-made translation—and (3) if both these points could be settled, is it safer to do it on one's own hook, or try to make a treaty with a publisher ?

Now, supposing all these things were satisfactory, and that the book is altogether sublime as the beginning of it is—I should like to do that, annotate it, and then make my own book—if I did it at all—a sort of easy beginner's book—an essayish kind of a book, which should *look* very heterodox and attractive and very easy, and should be a sort of decoy duck.

. . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

Aix,
May 14th (1892).

. . . . .

Such a charming scene yesterday, outside a cottage on the hill—a man holding down a large sheep, and a woman carefully cutting its fleece off with a pair of largish scissors—its two lambs dancing about in fierce excitement. The cut-off fleece was over its head, and it was lying quite still, so we asked if it wasn't smothered, and she lifted the fleece up and showed the passive old sheep lying quite sensibly quiet underneath, kissed it effusively and said

amiable nothings, and put it back again. Then a neighbour came down very indignant at her shearing it with scissors—*she* wouldn't think of doing such a thing, and she pointed to the minutest scratch the sheep had got. Then a man on the road was asked to come and help—but he had got too good a coat on. When we came back again, the sheep was just finished, and the lambs in a surprised affectionate fuss. It was all so nice and individual. Oh, I do feel so different from the first year I was here! Do you remember seeing those sisters picking herbs—and it gave me such an awful pang because I wanted to be human again. I do feel so much more in league with the stones of the field now. The nightingales are quite as good as Bully.* If you whistle four monotonous notes, they will take up the next strain—the bubbling note—and *they* don't make invidious distinction between men and women.

. . . . .

Gerry † has just been so very nice, but I can't believe she will be so nice when she knows me better. Now the satisfaction with you is that I shall never cease to be your daughter, however disagreeable you may find me out to be.

(*To her Mother.*)

May 17 (1892).

. . . . .

I have had such queer talks with H—— T——. Her view of literature is that no plays or novels

* My mother's bullfinch.
† Miss Gertrude Liddell.

can be bad—as long as they represent "reality," which, as usual, means disagreeable reality. That everybody had better know everything, and most of them try everything—that extreme friendships are inadvisable, because they prevent people marrying—but what is advisable is that women should be abjectly devoted to their husbands up to utter self-abnegation—but that is after all the extremest selfishness. That nothing changes men but religion and being in love, and neither of these for long.

And yet she is the mother of three grown-up sons, and a woman of the world. Isn't it—some of it,—like a very crude girl trying to be cynical—and much of it is not at all nice, only there is a naïveness about it which saves it.

. . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

Aix-les-Bains,
May 25th (1892).

. . . . .

Oh, this place *is* lovely! Fred says he never was in a town which smelt so little of anything but roast coffee and flowers. Two nights ago I woke up in the moonlight, and the air was perfectly rippling with 3 or 4 birds singing outside. I didn't want to "cease upon the midnight"—in any other but the temporary manner of sleep, however. Still—I want to come home.

. . . . .

(*To her Father.*)

Aix-les-Bains,
May 29th (1892).

. . . . . .

Lucy told me you had been speaking about the need for the Anti-Socialist pamphlets. I wish someone else would try writing them too—I am making attempts to imitate Morris's methods and style. It's difficult neither to concentrate too much on one side, nor to make it dull by having too few points on the other. I have got a scheme for four which I hope to finish out here.

. . . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

Aix-les-Bains,
May 30th (1892).

. . . . . .

The general accusation against Spinoza's philosophy is that there follows from it that if everything is One, such a philosophy assumes that Good is one with Evil, and that there is no distinction between good and evil, and so all Religion is done away with. People say that there is no distinction between good and evil *in themselves*, therefore it is indifferent whether one is good or bad. It must be confessed that the distinction between Good and Evil *in themselves*—that is, in God, the only true reality—is done away. In God there is no evil—there would only be a distinction between Good and Evil if God were evil ; but one cannot allow that evil is affirmative, and that this affirmative principle is in God. God is good and only good ; the distinction of evil and good in this One (person), in this substance—is non-existent.

(*To her Mother.*)

Addington Park,
Aug. 8th (1892).

. . . . . .

I'm going to see J—— but I shan't talk about my soul because it isn't worth it . . .

I am quite well and perfectly rested—but I am rather sick at heart—and don't understand anything—however like Mrs. E—— I feel perhaps "we are not intended to."

. . . . . .

(*To her brother Arthur.*)

Addington,
Aug. (12th), 1892.

. . . . . .

We have seen something of F——,* and she talks stern Church always. Everyone is described according to their being "good Church-people" or not. "A married B—they were fair Church-people—" Lucy begins to think it accounted for—that Papa should be Archbishop—much more accountable than her *own* father's being so.

. . . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

Nottingham.
(1892.)

. . . . . .

You see it is worrying—nothing else—which has made things tasteless—one can't settle to doing anything if one is worrying. Now I am demoralised

* A cousin.

it's true, but I *will* do things properly again—and I don't feel any longer as if I *couldn't*. I really am most tremendously relieved. Dearest Mother, I will take any amount of good advice now, and want it badly. I have brought Hegel and an Italian Grammar and the Ring and the Book, and sketching things—and I don't want to have an illness.

. . . . .

CHAPTER VII

EGYPT

In her twenty-eighth year a change passed over her, of which she was conscious herself; she arrived at a certain maturity of thought and purpose, and her aims defined themselves more clearly.

A friend writes :—

"Someone once said of Maggie, 'She will pass from childhood to womanhood without any intervening phase of "young ladyhood" '—and I think this is exactly what actually happened. Writing in the year 1892, she says, 'I feel as if I had really grown-up this year. I believe you will find me quite different—nor nearly so cut and dried and matter of fact and *logical!*' Up to this time, in spite of her extraordinary intellectual development, she had retained a singularly childlike view of life as a whole. Her plans for the future had been all of things to be done and schemes to be worked out both for herself and other people, all full of most vital interest as regards ideas, but showing in some ways a curious immaturity of actual experience. Marriage for instance, was to be fitted in sometime—perhaps; or rather, we were to find ourselves married at some remote period; but for the moment she would

say that she herself could never conceive of meeting anyone who was 'man enough to marry and yet woman enough to love.'

But this touch of crudity could not long exist in a nature so full of human sympathy and tenderness. She was swift to learn from the experiences of others. Her friends had always rushed to her for comfort and advice; and they did not cease from troubling as time went on. The victims of conflicting temperaments and those who had rebelled against religious intolerance in early youth now found life surprisingly similar and full of injustice, even though they were free to act and believe as they liked. Maggie threw her very self into the life-stories of those who poured them out to her, and not only for the moment, not only while she 'listened breathlessly' to the mere recital, but continuously—following the developments with eagerest interest and keeping the personalities and details of each drama as a living picture in her heart. I am certain that she never in her life betrayed a confidence; but she loved to discuss impersonally the problems and incidents of such stories, musing and wondering and often smiling over the strange unaccountableness of human nature and its unexpected developments. Her judgments, as always, were absolutely her own, and she never hesitated to express them, though she often advised people 'to consult some one else, because of course I may be entirely wrong.' Often her views were directly opposed to those commonly accepted. She believed, for instance, that women generally judged other women far more leniently than men judged them. She thought that men had what

she called 'marrying moods' and that then if they were refused by one woman they would certainly go off and ask another—*often some one with the same Christian name.* She often declared that men and women showed the very worst side of themselves when they were in love, and wondered whether this was the reason that so many marriages turned out so indifferently. I have heard her say she believed that if men and women were married off 'at sight' the marriages would turn out about as well as they did at present. This of course was only her criticism on actual *results.* As a matter of fact, no one could be more emphatic than she in advising against a marriage for anything but love—on the woman's side at least. I believe that at the back of her heart she always considered that most men ought to have their wives chosen for them. But she was convinced that a woman *could not* marry without love unless she was absolutely forced to it. She used to say that this was a fact which no man novelist ever really grasped. Writing once to a girl who thought she could marry a man she did not love, because he had said 'the marriage would be the salvation of him,' she expressed herself with all the force and decision which in spite of her tenderness she never feared to show:

'Oh my dear child, are you taking it sufficiently seriously? I *know* you are in one way, but I mean in this way—whether you are sufficiently considering if as companions merely you would be suitable? or if not whether you *can* stand, or he either, the sacrifice that such close companionship involves if you aren't entirely suitable. If you are doing it at all out of pity I do think it needs enormous

consideration—there are few people who could do it well—who could make it succeed. And I do think you have to consider this too, that though a man, being in love with you and knowing you well in all external relations, may think you can do everything for him and make him anything you like—you and he might find it so different when you were brought into that close relationship—I mean that time and continual demand seem to prove so often that one person cannot go on giving spiritual force—life—without receiving it back—that he couldn't go on getting his moral impulse from you if you were getting none from him. Of course exceptionally it may be so—but the person who is so drained upon needs to have immense moral force. Then at the same time do you quite enough consider what marriage might be? . . . Think of the difference between this marriage and a marriage with a man you loved, and thoroughly respected and trusted, and could lean upon as much at any rate as he would upon you. Do wait. Do reflect. Don't let generous impulses hurry you into a position which your nature couldn't ultimately stand.'

I have said that she never shrank from advising and even urging strongly those who seemed in danger of taking a wrong turn and who appealed to her for guidance; but this was not her invariable custom. Nothing was ever more characteristic of her than the loving and absolute confidence she could show when she felt that the line taken would be the right one. 'After your letter of this morning,' she wrote soon after, 'I shall have no fears. Whatever you ultimately decide will be right if you go about it in that spirit.'

And just as she could give herself out in complete sympathy to those who were in trouble or perplexity —so too she rejoiced absolutely and entirely with those who rejoiced. She never if she could possibly help it let any depression or suffering of her own cast its shadow over some one else's happiness.

'Oh this mood is only a passing thing—your serenity is the real stuff!' she once said;—yet she accepted sympathy, whether silent or expressed, with the simplicity which was always characteristic of her. 'It made all the difference knowing that you knew, but that you would not speak unless I wished it.'

It was difficult for anyone who was not constantly with her to realise how much she had to bear, and how bravely she bore those limitations which her health forced upon her. In her letters she alludes from time to time to 'not being much better,' and of having to try this cure and that; but she herself believed so absolutely that it was all a matter of time, that she made others believe the same. And between times she showed such an extraordinary rallying power, did so much, filled her life with so many and such varied interests, covered so much ground and so swiftly, that no one could have dreamed to what extent she was really interrupted and hindered.

I remember seeing her after an absence of some months and being struck by a change in her. She had been abroad for her health all the winter and I expected to find her much better, but I thought her looking worse, and was dismayed, and said so. She was fond of medical details and took her customary impersonal interest in her own symptoms and their

causes ; but with me she talked of them jestingly, purposely using technical terms which she knew I did not understand and which she would not explain —and in this fashion she would laugh away my anxiety. Too easily, as I now think. But it was one of her standing jokes against me that I knew nothing of illness, was frightened where there was no need for fear, and yet showed an unnatural calm and cheerfulness in the acutest crises. She has constantly assured me that it was ' for this quality alone ' that Mrs. Benson asked me in the following winter to go to Egypt with her. It is impossible to say how enchanted I was at the mere thought. I had always longed to go to the East ; to go with Maggie was like the realisation of a dream."

(*To her Father.*)

18 Trinità dei Monti,
Rome.
Jan. 29, 1893.

. . . . .

I didn't hear much of the Beatification Service to-day, but I got a very good sight of the Pope. One has to go in black, with a veil on, instead of a hat (for the Pope's sake, not for the sake of the Beatified). There was an immense crowd, which streamed up the stairs, and routed the Swiss guard—I saw one of them floating along in the stream. Then we waited for an hour—it was in the loggia of St. Peter's—before the Pope appeared, walking in procession ; such a white, transparent face—a fine profile—blessing, as he went, with a trembling hand. They shouted and clapped, but it was not very genuine—one heard the same voice, the Pope's

"clapper" beginning every time. To the end I could not find out *who* was being beatified. The cardinals were very stately, with their purple silk and red, and servants walking behind them. We met one taking his walk in the Campagna, in full dress, the other day.

. . . . . .

(*From Mrs. Benson to A. C. Benson.*)

Vinters, Maidstone.
Oct. 27, 1893.

. . . . . .

. . . and besides, mingled with the memories of to-day there comes the thought of Maggie's leaving us again so soon, about which I have never wavered in desire for a single moment, but still it is hard to face.

. . . . . .

Maggie is feeling the weather and she is rather shaken with an accident which came to nothing serious, but might have done—on Monday she was coming back riding with your father, and they began to gallop across the field from Whalley's to the house, as you always do. Your father went a little nearer the may-tree than usual, and Maggie, following, scarcely knew for a moment which side to go. Ajax shied—she pulled—and the result was that she went bang, with her face against the bent trunk. It was an awful blow—but most mercifully no concussion, no damage to eyes, no breaking of nose—nothing but really a horrid blow—the swelling has now gone down, but she has a handsome black eye. Still she delivered a lecture on "The indirect effect of strikes" to over 100 men on Tuesday evening,

lecturing for an hour, and *discussing* for an hour—answering the most foolish, and the most complicated questions respectively, and entirely, till one man, a leading Socialist, said she had answered "fairly and squarely," and would she give some more lectures, and whenever she spoke, they would come and hear. The Croydon Socialists! Isn't it a triumph?

. . . . . .

(*To Miss Gent.*)

Addington Park,
Croydon.
(1893.)

Dearest child this isn't a letter. After posting up to London to be dentisted to-day, I am too exhausted to write a letter to anybody though I owe many—

. . . . . .

I seem to have passed into such a new phase of existence now since I came down here and haven't seen many L.M.H. people. At least in one way it isn't new, but like what it was about 7 years ago. It may sound silly but it's rather like convalescing—I think I was very nasty during my last year at L.M.H. That sounds as if I thought I was very nice before and after—I suppose it's latent now—or that I am nasty in a way which doesn't disturb me so much. I wish I could think of something equivalent to "bless you" which didn't sound patronising.

. . . . . .

Her health now made it necessary that she should go farther afield, and it was thought that

Photo by J. Thomson.]

MAGGIE.
Aged 28. 1893. [*To face page* 150.

a winter in Egypt might get rid of the rheumatism which still affected her She travelled with my brother Fred, who was endlessly kind in subordinating his plans to hers ; he writes—

"I went with her several times to Egypt, to Athens, to Florence, and stayed more than once with her at Aix. She was most active of all at Athens, sketching and going on expeditions, hearing lectures at the Archæological School, helping me with German, and herself taking lessons in modern Greek. At Athens we got up a farce, 'The Duchess of Bayswater,' nominally to amuse English Governesses and residents. Then the British Mediterranean fleet came into Piræus, and we said the sailors might come, if they would supply half the entertainment. This was done, and the first half consisted of hornpipes and songs. Then the Royal Family announced their intention of being present, and the audience consisted of Kings and Queens, governesses and sailors. The play in question is a roaring farce, and Maggie acted the Duchess. Next day the Queen of Greece sent for her, and asked if the English aristocracy really behaved like that . . .

We used to dine out a good deal at Athens in the evening, and entertained people in a simple way. We once invited a Greek country M.P. to tea, and were astonished at the immense quantity of buns and tartlets which he ate. We found out later that it was considered impolite not to eat anything that was offered you.

Then we went over to Egypt, and up the Nile as far as Assouan. Maggie used to make all the expeditions from the steamer, riding a donkey.

Next year, we went again, and the digging at Mut was begun. She used to ride out morning and afternoon usually to Karnak, and help to superintend. She, a friend of hers and I wrote a series of stories in the old National Observer about a gathering of people at the Villa Palmieri, in the manner of Boccaccio. She learned Arabic (not, I think, getting very far) and could read some amount of hieroglyphic. We often went day-long excursions to the other side of the river.

She was an admirable traveller, never getting fussed, nor wondering if connections would be missed, or if trains would be caught."

A friend writes—

"She loved Egypt and she loved the ancient Egyptians. She seemed to absorb the very spirit that had animated them. I think there was something in the mystery and dignity of those old beliefs that corresponded to the awe and reverence for religion that existed in her own soul. She loved Italy and she loved Greece, but I think she loved Egypt best of all and that the land was indeed as she said once, 'in her very heart.'

She got leave from the Government while I was with her to excavate an Egyptian temple—the Temple of Mut by Karnak, and she threw her whole heart into the carrying out of the work. She herself has told the story of it in her book, 'The Temple of Mut in Asher,' which she wrote in conjunction with her great friend, Miss Gourlay, who joined her and helped her in the work in the following year. No one can read the book without seeing how

absolutely she had familiarised herself with the whole life and times and very being of the people who had originally raised that temple, and with all that it had meant and expressed to them. She loved to talk and ponder over their ideas of life, of death, and of the life after death. All that related to the 'ka'—the personality—the individuality—all their beliefs about the soul fascinated her. She loved their symbol of the soul—the hawk—which guarded the innermost sanctuary of humanity in life, and which spread its wings and soared into the unknown when life had departed. I remember her delight when she came across such a symbol—the model of a hawk—amongst some antiques in a dealer's store, and how eagerly she bargained for and bought it and carried it away, saying that she knew her father would love it and that she should give it to him. The Archbishop had it mounted and enclosed in a little glass case, and I believe it always stood on his writing-table.

She has not told in her book of the devotion which the Arabs she employed had for her. We used to sit under a tent by the side of the Temple and watch them at their work of excavation in the everlasting eastern sunshine, and they used to sing about her as a great English princess of fabulous wealth. One of them asked me one day whether 'Miss Binson's father' (reputed to be a great patriarch) 'lived in the same village as the Queen of England?' I often remember the perplexed looks of a party of American tourists when they visited the excavation and had her thus pointed out to them by our donkey-boys. They must have thought it strange to see an English princess sitting in the sand, and quarrelling

with a very disrespectful lady-in-waiting as to which of them could build the best castle. The boys took a special pride in working for her, and when she was ill used to charge me with endless messages to her. 'Tell her I am *too* sorry!' one of them said with tears. 'Please to tell her "how do you do" from Mahmoud,' another said. When we left Luxor, her own special donkey-boy came to see us off on the Nile steamer and ran a long way on the bank trying to keep up with us, and calling through his sobs, 'Miss Binson! Miss Binson! don't forget me—don't forget me!'

But her illnesses often brought weary days and nights, or kept her a prisoner in bed, and tried even her eager spirit. She had times of depression which she fought but could not always conquer: times when even her hopefulness was dimmed. I never heard her complain or lose patience; it was only as she got better that she would admit that she had suffered—and then she was always eager to forget it, and to have her mind diverted from it. She still loved games, and played them with the abandonment of a child. The impromptu rhymes which she and her brother Fred composed in the games we played on paper, still remain in my mind as some of the cleverest and wittiest things either of them ever wrote. She once designed and helped to make fancy dresses for herself and me, copied from old Egyptian pictures, and although we were cut off from shops and could get practically nothing in the Arab market, she succeeded so well that when she appeared at the hotel dance as the goddess Mut, in a wonderful vulture head-dress, every one exclaimed

in delight, and M. Naville, the Egyptologist, was amazed at her clever achievement. I still have the scarlet and gold necklace and the fillet which she painted for me to wear as Princess Nefert.

She and I used to spend hours in the desert, which we both loved, sometimes reading or sketching, sometimes playing the old game of weaving stories of the future, and of what our sons and daughters should be and do. She never faltered nor said 'It will not be'; but sometimes she would fall silent, looking across the desert with a strange wistfulness, as though already her soul longed to spread its wings and soar in the freedom of those wastes of air; then suddenly would rouse herself, and turn back and smile, and take up her tale again.

She was extraordinarily unselfish in illness, never taking services as a matter of course, far less claiming them as a right; and though she was obedient and docile as a patient, she tried to throw off invalid habits the moment she found a chance. She was touchingly grateful and surprised at the devotion of others for herself; and often spoke with a kind of awe and wonder of the love with which her mother, in particular, had always surrounded her—that love which had made her home the happiest place in the world for her."

(*To her Mother.*)

Grand Hotel,
Athens.
Nov. 18 (1893).

. . . . .

We went to see Miss Tricoupis—ἡ Κυρια Σοφια she is called—(I can't put on accents, as I don't

begin my lessons till Tuesday); such a charming old lady, who nearly kisses you at the first interview. She never goes out, except to the funerals of her friends, and to the cemetery, about once in 10 days, —but she receives Greeks from 8 in the morning to 2 at night, and foreigners all afternoon. She has never even heard her brother speak except from the window of the house. She collects monograms, seals, etc., and she asked me to get her "Lambeth Palace" as printed on a sheet of paper, so could you send me a Lambeth sheet of paper, and would papa give me an impression of his seal and his signature for her? She really is a most dear old lady, rapturously adoring her brother—saying that he "never made a mistake or did anything wrong."

. . . . .

Oh Mother, I *shall* be glad to get your letters—to-morrow. The "dream" has so enveloped me as to rather cut me off from the world—but I DO want to hear.

(*To her Mother.*)

Athens.

. . . . .

I had a very nice letter from S. R. I told you what I said to him, that he didn't believe in the possibilities of his character—which amounted to not believing in the plan or the power of God. He answers that he believes in the power of grace, if he only willed at the time to use it—but that when despair seizes him, it is that he so often *hasn't* willed at the time what he resolved to do before, that ultimately he gets to despair of ever doing so. But

that now he is trying Brother Laurence's plan of taking no notice of failures except to ask forgiveness and start again. What I *think* I shall say is this more or less—that the willing at the time is part of the very temptation. So that if you doubt your doing that, you are really doubting your power to resist temptation. I think that last plan is exactly what *he* wants though, as he weakens himself by thinking too much about his faults. O I wish you could be here at any rate for an hour a week to talk about things.

. . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

Athens.
Dec. 12 (1893).

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This morning after my Greek lesson I went to Calirrhoë—it was delicious there. There was a girl washing clothes in a pool, and a little white spotted pig running over the clothes as they lay drying.

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(*To her Mother.*)

Athens.
Dec.17th, 1893.

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We had such an amusing day on Friday. On Thursday evening we met the Captain of the *Edinburgh*, Captain Brackenbury, at the Legation, and he asked me if I had ever seen a man-of-war ; as you know, I didn't know very much about them—so he asked us down to lunch and to see it next day, and

sent a boat for us to the Piræus. We felt awfully grand—and it was interesting! We both dreadfully wanted to be midshipmen. Then just when we had had lunch, a sailor came running to say that royalty was passing,—the captain flew to get his best coat—all the band rushed up to the top deck and played a march, while everyone else stood saluting as the boat passed,—only a Greek minister going to call on one of the Russian ships, after all! Then just when they had calmed down and dispersed, the boat was seen returning, and they all had to fly back. We spent about two hours there. It was awfully funny, being entertained by a man whom one had never seen till the night before, and probably never will see again—and the chaplain of the ship had been curate to Mr. Allen Edwards in South Lambeth—ridiculous!

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. . . I like Mr. A—— less. I don't like that type a bit, though in many ways I like the individual. It may be coloured a little by the fact that he doesn't much like me—but I am glad that I belong to the professional classes.

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(*To her Mother.*)

Athens.
(1893.)

. . . . . .

In some ways I am glad to be going to Egypt soon, as the time is come about when my home-sickness begins to grow, so change is rather acceptable,—but I do enjoy lots of things here very much, and besides, I am sure it is good all round to be here; but I get sudden pictures of the schoolroom, and

people beginning to come in about tea-time, as you must be doing just now, and cats lying about,—and an atmosphere I like—(moral not physical)—oh, I DO like it !

. . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

Athens.
Dec. 24 (1893).

. . . . .

Oh, I know it doesn't matter—Fred and I are having an amicable evening, and with this accumulation I had so far to depart from Sabbathine principles as to go with him to see Miss Tricoupis this afternoon—she was dreadfully affectionate (I took her the seal and autograph) and sat holding Fred's hand, and kissed me, and has sent him Tricoupis' signed photograph,—and poured herself out to him about the political situation.

. . . . .

The Greek Member was charming. He wears national costume, and has a blood-feud in his family. He has got to kill the next man but he says if he can get legal redress he will refrain. He is a beautiful man to look at—young—though he has a son at the University—but as he told Mrs. Gardner, people who have blood-feuds in their family are obliged to marry early.

We have got a terrible day before us—for we have to rehearse, to have a Xmas tree, and to dine, with punch and general revels, at the Gardners' to-morrow—it is rather a comfort on the whole that I am not going down to-morrow to the ship. . . .

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. . . On reading this over it seems rather folly to write an account of a fuss which is quite over, and which you won't even get till a week afterwards. But I got into a condition of fussed depression yesterday—and, on the whole, having written it, I think I will send it, because I want you to know all the various kinds of things which go on here. Then too, there is no one here I can " pour out " to.

(*To her Mother.*)

Athens.
Dec. 28 (1893).

. . . . . .

I had a nice little talk to the Queen ! I shan't come home unless you promise to invite plenty of Royalties and Ambassadors to meet me. It is a toy country though.

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(*To her Father.*)

Grand Hotel,
Athens.
Dec. 29 (1893).

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We have had rather too social a week,—but we could not well have helped it—Mama will tell you what happened ultimately at the acting. The King told Fred next day (he met him on the *Trafalgar*) that he and I ought to go on the stage,—Broad Comedy, what is called " Pantomime business," was what the King chiefly appreciated. Fred has made quite a reputation as a comic actor here.

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(*To her Mother.*)

Grand Hotel,
Athens.
Dec. 29 (1893).

. . . . .

It's rather amusing seeing the Queen here—not formidable, for you sit down and have a comfortable chat. She discussed Dodo which she had just finished reading, and pronounced her "horrid," and wanted to know how true it was of the English aristocracy and whether Fred admired it. She liked Chesterford—but the book she spoke of with enthusiasm was Donovan—"so noble."

We dine at the Legation again to-night—quietly, because Mr. Egerton has lost his brother-in-law, Mr. Edward Stanhope. He is really an interesting man. He has his study hung round with pictures of race-horses—he is immensely keen on archæological subjects, and you find he knows about every subject that is mentioned—*e.g.*, they were talking about Hungarian the other day, and he explained to me its relationship to all other languages, and its formation, and it appeared that he reads the Hungarian Bible every night.

. . . . .

We have just heard that we have to dine at the Palace to-morrow—a sort of general big dinner, but happily not long. We and the Royal Family are quite hand in glove this week. Fred had a conversation with both King and Queen yesterday. It's *very* like the Rose and the Ring.

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(*To her Mother.*)

Athens.
Jan. 1 (1894).

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We went to the Palace last night. It was rather amusing, except that we had to stand for an hour and a half while the Royal Family paraded round and asked us how we did. I talked to the King and Queen and Crown Princess and little princess—so did Fred—and also to one prince. It is astonishing the amount they manage to remember about people —they were very amiable and complimentary about the acting. Fred felt frightfully socialistic, because they all kept us standing for some time while they had a little family chatter at the end of the room—but I don't think I object. Royalty ought to pose a little, and a dramatic pose is wholesome. While we were waiting for them to come round Mrs. B—— confided to me that she wished we had been friends to a greater degree, and wept two tears.

I had a funny time yesterday afternoon. A little American millionaire, by name H——, who acted with us, told Fred he wished to call on me. So while I was just going to settle down to tea and a book quite alone, he came up unannounced, and settled himself for a talk—so there was nothing to be done. He is going to Egypt a fortnight after we do, and then is coming back here with his sisters, whom he says he very much wants to make my acquaintance. He is a very funny little man, who plays a great deal of Wagner by heart very badly.

. . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

Grand Hotel Abbat,
Alexandrie (Egypte).
Jan. 4 (1894).

. . . . . .

We had to hoist a yellow flag and Fred was dreadfully afraid we were going to be quarantined ; however, a lot of boats came and looked over our papers and gabbled a good deal—and we were beginning to look wistfully for our Cook and wonder why he didn't come—when suddenly the boats which had been examining our papers, I suppose, gave a signal—for about 20 boats of all sorts of different colours, suddenly appeared out of nothing, with people of all sorts of costumes, rowing wildly towards us, standing on the seats or sitting, shouting and waving, like the best water-show you ever saw. Then they rushed on deck, and all began shrieking at once, and as no one could hear anyone else, waving their arms wildly. And they rushed and offered one boats and hotels and carriages *ad infinitum*, and to all Fred only said, " I want Cook." Then at last a man dressed apparently in a white nightgown and scarlet jersey, with " Cook " in flaming yellow embroidered on him, hurled himself into Fred's arms—then we felt safe, and whenever we got offered anything else, we only said, " I've got Cook."

. . . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

Hotel du Nil,
Cairo.
Jan. 5 (1894).

. . . . .

We went in the afternoon to the Pyramids—Cheops, etc. "Mr. Sharps" one of the Arab guides called him—we went in to the big one—very hot and very hard, and not much to see. Then Fred went to the top, and I took camel rides, and then we went to the Sphinx. I was awfully disappointed when I saw the back of its head—it was so very small—then we went and stood in front of it, and it grew upon one extraordinarily—in size even—the extraordinary fact of its being out there in the desert, looking straight away over the sand with a curious far-off look, and the curious peace and smile of the face, in spite of the features being so disfigured,—it gives one a feeling of such wonderful calm, in spite of a herd of shrieking Arabs around—you seem somehow to get into silence—it is really so—no nonsense!

. . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

Assouan Hotel,
Assouan.
Jan. 19 (1894).

. . . . .

After tea we went to the bazaar and found all sorts of fascinating Soudanese and dervishes' implements—such people too—enormously tall Soudanese, perfectly black, and copper Nubians—and Bedouins with one sheet round them and elaborately frizzed

hair. They are the most *beautiful* people, with such a step and great wild fearless eyes—the little children are so perfectly beautiful, too—you would rejoice in the bare limbs—they don't mostly wear anything except a string of leather and beads—sometimes not that—but you get to regard dress as a European prejudice. As Mr. Smith said about the Jubilee Service in the Abbey, "dress is optional" here.

. . . . .

The temple* is most lovely—far and away more beautiful than anything I have seen before—for it is so beautifully coloured with delicate blues and greens—one thinks at first that the stone is worn, as if with weather—then you see that it is all covered with hieroglyphics between the pillars.

. . . . .

Then we went back in a boat down the cataract—it was delightful, quite exciting (not at all dangerous) for our boats turned straight round once (this is not down the worst part of the cataract), the men sang as they went, every sentence shouted 7 or 8 times staccato and as we got down the difficult bits it ended in chorus "Hip hip hoorah, hip hip hoorah, tank you very much, tank you very much." Then little copper-coloured boys, who lay on logs and kicked along in the water, surrounded the boat. It was all so strange and "foreign"—and such a curiously varied day. We didn't get back till about 5.30. We have been there again to-day and lunched with the Newmans.

. . . . .

There are many things that I should like to talk

* Philae.

to you about that are difficult to write. For instance, it looks ridiculous in a letter when I say that for the first time almost I feel as if I had had a little taste of the world at Athens—of course as Miss H—— would say, I couldn't be worldly if I tried—but don't you know how in one's life at home one isn't really much thrown across people who have other standards and beliefs. And oh, I do like my native kind so much the best—as I do care so much more for green fields and grey skies than for palm trees and deserts and temples.

. . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

Luxor Hotel,
Luxor.
Jan. 23 (1894).

. . . . . .

I am sorry to have missed all those nice children —as well as a good many other things, but weather not included. Oh, by the way, I want to make some plans for what I shall do when I get back. Do you think I could lecture in London? I want to finish the illustrations of my book—and I shall have to go to South Kensington for some of them—but after that, do you think I might undertake a short course, or would it interfere too much with dinner-parties and London in general? I ought to settle soon.

There are some things you would like immensely in Egyptian religion. A man consists of his body, his double which lives in his tomb, his soul, and the Luminous, which is a divine spark. Do you know how much ritual Moses got from Egypt? It was quite new to me.

. . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

Luxor Hotel.
Jan. 28 (1894).

. . . . . .

Fred has just gone, and I shall go to Church and hope we may have a hymn about a pilgrim in a land unknown, for that is very much what I feel like.

I have got the Koran to read, but oh! it is dull.

Very very much love. My family are much nicer people than any I have met since.

. . . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

Luxor.
Jan. 30 (1894).

. . . . . .

My little programme has begun—and I have been making lovely expeditions. The feeling of loneliness is however a good deal dissipated by the furious conversation we have been having at meals—always with the two men who are left—Mr. A—— and the other whose name I have discovered is B——. We have just managed to keep one meal clear of serious topics, but to-day it has begun again worse than ever. Such as friendship, the value of life, of existence at large, the Salvation Army, sudden conversions, the basis of religion, the distinction of classes, falling in love at first sight, isolation, and Mr. A——'s character—I really can't help it. People do suggest odd things here.

. . . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

Luxor.
Feb. 1 (1894).

. . .

I have just got your letter, and what I feel moved to write and say is that the upshot of my remark about the World is not that I want any more of it at home (except in the smallest possible driblets), but how enormously and tremendously nicer home is because it hasn't got that element.

> " The world is very evil
> The times are waxing late "

is quite what I feel—in the little bit I have had of it—one hears things that make you sick—and I hear remarkably few, I know, of what there are. The only thing I should like more of—it will amuse you, but I feel quite capable of saying it out loud—is the society of young men. I have had much more of that than of girls since I came out—naturally with Fred.

I think I shall ask Mr. A—— to come and see us. We have got on excellently, more or less off deep ground lately—he isn't genuine exactly—he has asked me to come and see the " Master builder " with him in the summer. Yes I am sure it is good having different kinds of people—but that particular flavour in the atmosphere which I don't know any other name for than the world, however varied, I *don't want*—and yet I think it is that—the flavour rather than exactly the individuals, which E—— thinks us narrow in—you know when you come across it even in men who are on the whole nice, and feel how awfully nice it is that there are men who haven't got it at all, and yet who must have

come across it. I wonder whether this letter says at all what I mean—one can't write it otherwise than as a soliloquy with all that time between.

. . . . . .

This place grows on one extraordinarily. I don't feel as if I should have really had an idea of Egypt at all if I hadn't stayed here—bas-reliefs of kings in chariots are only now beginning to look individual instead of made on a pattern, and the immensity of the whole thing is beginning to dawn—and the colours, oh my *goodness!* You get to see them more every day.

. . . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

Luxor Hotel,
Luxor.
Feb. 4 (1894).

I had been thinking all morning how everything was going on just as usual at home—the sound of the gong, and doors opening and shutting, and the wind coming in from the garden—when suddenly I remembered that you were all travelling too, and it seemed so strange that we should ever leave home at all. . . .

. . . . . .

You go across the sandy plain where Thebes is, and then turn up to what looks like an old water-course among sandstone hills, and after riding some way up you come to a place where there are sandy hillocks all round, and several holes in the ground—inside you go down staircases and galleries, all painted and hieroglyphiced, through most

wonderful painted halls, with square pillars, on each side the king meeting one of the gods—often they hold the symbol of life towards him. On most of the passages there are the most awful many-headed creatures often with 4 human legs, they represent the monsters which the soul has to fight in the next world before it attains heaven. It is really tremendously interesting. I never thought I should care about Egyptian things so much—and it does make such a difference having plenty of time; most people, for instance, combine that expedition with seeing two other temples and a steep walk across the mountains! We saw nothing else, but went through five tombs slowly. While we were in the first a party of tourists came after us—and by the time we had got to the last half of it, we found they had all gone again.

. . . . . .

The Koran is so dull and so silly—I shall have to try to read a little more to-day, but it will fit pretty well with my scheme of religion I think.

I wish I could write better letters than this. I think it is partly from being so long with people I don't talk very freely to.

. . . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

Luxor Hotel,
Luxor.
Feb. 10 (1894).

. . .

Post goes to-morrow, and oh joy, comes in too, and though I am rather stupid I think I shall write to-night. I had begun my book and had just got

to "there are different regions in which a man's mind works," when I found that a woman's mind wasn't going to work at all in that region, and gave it up.

We had a long ride to-day, horses for once—out through beanfields in flower and corn in the ear in some places. Past Karnak to an old Coptic convent, deserted now, with a curious old Church—then across flat sandy desert to a little hill, where all round one could see pink mountains, with sharp blue shadows where they caught the light. Sandhills outlined by shadows of the clouds that came softly over them—such a mirage too, like a long creek of water, which got misty at the edge, and then increased again as we came towards it.

. . . . .

Miss A—— has come—that is nice—I really like her—and even when I don't altogether, she interests me.

. . . . .

There are a few things that are exercising my mind. I think if I didn't mind people's opinion so much, I should find it easier to settle down. I mean I shouldn't be biassed by knowing I was affected by opinion. I am ludicrously—it somehow comes home to one more when one is with people one doesn't agree with fundamentally, and yet one goes on being affected by their opinion in little mean stupid ways that I am ashamed of, and yet I go on doing it—but I'm too much ashamed to tell you! I suppose that too is self-consciousness? Adeline said that she felt every day more how much in the way that stood.

We have got into the way lately of getting on such fearfully deep ground in conversation, my neighbour at meals and I—as deep as you could have—I think I have done it rather too much, and he's getting bored now. I have resolved not to many times, but something turns up, and we fall to, hammer and tongs, and it goes on the rest of the meal; I think it is at an end now, however, and this evening we had none. I don't think it is a good plan to do it so much.

A pair of sparrows has taken to coming into my room lately, and playing games at the window—the birds are wonderfully tame. A less pleasant visitor was a little scorpion I found yesterday walking down the passage outside my room. They are very rare in the house however. There are any amount under the stones at Karnak—they are not at all pleasant to look at.

. . . . .

You would be so interested in the Egyptian theories—the Ka—who has to be fed in the tomb and lives there. They used to engrave little prayers for passers-by to say, to ask that the Ka might have 1000 beeves and geese and onions and beer and some other things, and when the prayer was said, it was all the same to the Ka as having them. The great fear was that the Ka should be starved, or that the bodies they provided for him should be destroyed—because while the Luminous was following the gods, and the soul was fighting with serpents—the Shadow and the Name and the Heart had to wait to be reunited with the Ka. Isn't *that* nice?

. . . . .

Oh I have left such a beautiful little red goddess

in Athens. I would *never* have left her if I thought I shouldn't be able to fetch her myself.

. . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

Luxor.
Feb. 18 (1894).

. . . . .

There is a sort of tragedy going on here which A—— told me about. Small in a way, but one of the worst kinds—I must tell you about it. There is a boy, who was at Assouan, and is here now with his mother—quite young, only 22, and looking very nice, but evidently dying of consumption. The mother looks used up, I mean in spirit—which isn't much wonder—as her husband and 3 children died of consumption, and this boy is the last child. She is evidently no companion for him at all—he is never with her—and she sits in the garden quite alone ; at meals she sits a little way off from him. The other day there was no one near her—and neither he nor anyone else seemed to take any notice of her, and she got up suddenly and left the room when lunch was only just begun. Then he is engaged to be married, which of course must be hopeless—and he looks most miserable, with a sort of attempt to keep up appearances in spite of it—but lately he has begun to drink—he told Mr. A—— that he had been chiefly drunk for the last week—he never looks like it—the other amusement that I heard of his indulging in at Assouan was driving pariah dogs into the desert and spearing them. Of course it sounds most horrid—but it is so pitiable, for the boy is evidently driven to it by a sort of perfectly

reckless despair—and the unhappiness of his mother seems to react again. It is one of the most miserable things I ever saw—and yet he looks nice in spite of it. I don't know either him or the mother personally. I don't even know their names—but they sit at another table nearly opposite to me.

. . . . . .

You can't think what nice moral maxims old Egyptians used to give vent to. Such as that bad temper must be avoided as the root of evil, and if a man's soul is full of justice, there is no room for bad temper. I can't quote the exact words—but I am going to get books and pursue them further. I think I shall have to get a hieroglyphic dictionary too—you can't think how interesting they are, even a little of them, for the letters mean things in themselves.

I looked up in Church this morning and saw through the window waving palm branches, and the top of a house, and a girl standing on it, holding her veil, ready to cover her mouth if anyone looked at her—I thought of you—for it was exactly the sort of thing to make one feel so far off—and Eastern—in Church you know, with the first lesson going on !

. . . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

Luxor.
Feb. 22 (1894).

I have engaged a donkey by the day at last. It is a nice little donkey and boy, they offered me low terms—2*s*. a day, donkey and backsheesh all included—so I thought it worth while—but the final inducement on the boy's part, was that he

would wash the donkey and himself and have a clean dress, all of which were much needed, so that "somebody he say, dat donkey and boy blongs to Mrs. Benson, very clean donkey, very clean boy—somebody he say dat." The children really are very nice when they are not either lying or begging.

. . . . . .

I have been deliciously dawdling in the garden this afternoon—reading the Browning which Hugh and I so kindly gave you—you may not remember it, as Fred took it to Greece directly after, and I have had it nearly ever since.

. . . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

Luxor.
Feb. 27 (1894).

. . . . . .

One of my little friends has gone. He was so amiable when I had a cold, as to send in a book (he had previously lent me one of Meredith's) in case, if I was unwell, that I should find Meredith too stiff. I told him to come and see Lambeth when we get back, he has gone back to study criminal law. The other man is getting a little bored and boring, he asked me to come out a sail with him however the other day, but fortunately there was an excuse ready. People are funny—for one half of the hotel is exceedingly gossippy, and the other apparently particularly unconventional.

It has been cloudy, so I haven't done much sketching lately—and it has rained to-day. I found myself contemplating with rapture the scene through a gate at Medinet Habu which consisted of a green

field, a cow, and mist—and then realised it was that it looked so English. I haven't left myself enough time and must post this.

. . . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

Luxor.
March 4 (1894).

We went to the Coptic service this morning—but I shall tell Papa about that.

There is the sweetest little owl here, about as big as a fat pigeon, grey, which comes on to the palm-tree outside my window in the evening and mews at intervals through the night—at any rate as long as I am awake to hear him.

. . . . . .

(*To her Father.*)

Luxor.
March 4 (1894).

. . . . . .

I went with Miss Akers to the Coptic Service this morning—it was most curious—there were about 60 people there altogether though some of them came in very late. It struck one as intensely reverent—the reverence not really disturbed by the fact that every now and then the officiating priest or one of the congregation reproved a fidgetting child in a loud voice, and that when the priest read the wrong gospel, the congregation interrupted him, and a short conversation about the right one ensued. As far as I saw, the priest and two acolytes alone communicated, and in a most curious manner, and the ablutions were performed in a manner displeasing to one's taste, though not irreverent—they gave

us holy bread afterwards, which the people did not eat there but took away; it is round, and stamped with crosses and with coptic words—the only words I can make out at present are ΑΓΙΟC and ΘΕΟC but they are not printed distinctly. They sang not unmelodiously, the gospel and something else was read in Arabic, but the other service-book was Coptic.

. . . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

Luxor.
March 9 (1894).

. . . . . .

It is so funny to be so absolutely out of things as we are here—not to have the feeling of what is happening in England at all. Lucy so excited on the political situation quite gives me a turn. We try to talk politics a little, but on the whole talk more about what happened 6,000 years ago, etc., etc.

. . . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

Luxor.
March 11 (1894).

. . .

Such a garden to write in, that it is almost impossible to write.—One thing that keeps attracting one's eyes is a red bougainvillia with sun on it against a background of pale blue sky and greyish palm-trees, it is wonderful—and the birds are distracting. I acquired one of my own yesterday; as I came through the village I found some horrid

children holding a young hoopoe up by its wing, its leg being tied up, so I took it away from them—it had had its crown pulled out and it seemed at the last gasp. We revived it with weak whisky and water, and we put hardboiled egg down its throat, and so far it is thriving. I left it in a sort of crate on my window-sill, and found it walking about on my balcony—but it can't fly, and isn't old enough to feed itself, so if I can keep it alive, I shall bring it back with me.

. . . . .

When I came back to my room just now, I found the hoopoe had again got out, walked under the other door, and was half-way down the passage. I recognised him there by his silhouette—he looked wonderfully unbalanced without crown or tail!

. . . . .

I do want to come back to a place again where I haven't the disposition of my own life quite. One gets to think about nothing except what one wants to do—perhaps a revival of "plans" is good for a bit.

How is that cat I wonder—you won't forget to tell me, I know.

. . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

Luxor.

How is my little cat—you said nothing about her in your last letter, so I hope she is better? My hoopoe has died. He flourished wonderfully for three days, but on the fourth morning he died; whisky even wouldn't bring him round. It is sad.

I took his portrait and am going to write a story about him.

It is hot here. It has been over 80° in the shade for the last week or so.

The flies are the most awful nuisance now too—I came in this morning and found about 500 sitting in rows on my sofa—and a cloud of them in the middle of the room. One girl here, on getting out of bed the other morning, found a little scorpion comfortably curled up where she had been lying—most curiously it hadn't stung her.

You will be in the middle of the Channel about now—and may it be smooth to you! Much love to every one.

Your lovingest daughter,
MARGARET BENSON.

I have been making some drawings of pink mountains lately. I know you won't believe them at all—but they are so nevertheless.

(*To her Mother.*)

Post-Boat,
March 19 (1894).

. . . . .

How nice it is to be coming the other way—though I nearly cried when I left Luxor. My donkey boy promised me that he would come down and cry, he did squeeze out a tear, but then it occurred to him that he hadn't got a knife, so he spent the rest of the time in begging.

We had a grand expedition on Saturday. A Mrs. Hibbert, Mrs. Stewart and Miss Hudson and two donkey-boys and I started at 4, and rode out

into the desert—to a great rock, which we reached about 7. "'Twas sunset at starting, but when we drew near," the moon rose—then it became quite exciting because—

(*a*) We had had to give notice to the head of the police that we were going, for fear the police might meet us and shoot, thinking we were robbers;

(*b*) The head of the police said it was absolutely necessary that we should take a man with us with a gun, to shoot the robbers in case they came, and we told him to come, but he never turned up—being probably afraid of ghosts.

(*c*) The head of the police had told one of the party that he was also sending out a patrol after us. I didn't know all this until we were well on the way. But it was lovely—absolutely still, with full moonlight on the rocks and sand. When we had dined, we rode back again over miles of desert apparently, till we came near the cultivated part, and we saw the Ramadan fires where people were cooking their night meals, dogs rushed out and barked at us, it was light enough to have gallops over the sand in places. Then we went back by Karnak, but we saw not one person, no guard, no police, and no robbers. Absolutely no one from the time we reached the desert about 5.30 till we got back into Luxor at 11. Then we found a party mounted from the hotel, who were coming to rescue us, and when we got to the hotel itself, we were surrounded by Arabs who received us with howls of joy, as if we had been delivered from brigands. "How are you?" "Quite well—oh—we Arab men afraid for you—women, excoose me"—and so forth.

I don't believe there really was any danger at

all—but of course the police had to take all possible precautions.

. . . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

Villa Palmieri,
Florence.
April 12 (1894).

. . .

I haven't been doing much, except whistling to lizards; it is so fascinating to see them creep out of their holes to listen. Two got so enraptured with the strains of the Lorelei yesterday that they flew at each other, biting and kicking and rolling over.

Who shall say I am not musical after that? I arrested one this morning, as he was climbing over a stone, and all I could see of him was a hind leg and tail until the head appeared too to listen.

Oh, I do wish I could have gone back to England with you. Never mind—I am at any rate your own daughter.

. . .

(*To her Mother.*)

Villa Palmieri,
Florence.
April 22 (1894).

. . .

I knew that was the mean trick you and Dr. Ogle were up to—to make me take a course of Aix after a course of Pugny—but I have plenty of reasons against it.

1. I shan't and won't do it.
2. Aix will be getting very hot, and I have begun to feel heat much more of late.

3. All my friends will be going about the third week in May, and I should have to finish up by myself.

Besides that, you don't know how much better I should be at home. It is so dull being lazy without all one's things about, and with no little cats to play with. If I don't come home by the 16th of May, I shall feel bound either to begin to do as much as I possibly can, or to worry as much as I possibly can, and you know how bad that would be for me.

. . . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

Mont Caux Hotel.
(1894.)

. . .

I *am* grateful. I did not realise from the wording of Papa's telegram that he really left me *absolutely* free, so I wrote saying that unless he ceased to feel that I was acting against his wishes, I would rather not come.

Your letter puts me absolutely at rest on that score. You needn't really feel afraid of me. I feel that after all this I am so absolutely bound over to keep the peace, that I will.

. . . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

Llandaff.
June 21 (1894).

. . . . . .

I heard Hugh preach on Thursday—and take the service. I was enormously surprised with his reading. It is really good and his voice is so extremely pleasant: he intoned very fairly. There

was plenty in his sermon—though he said it was almost entirely out of Godet. He was rather hesitating in manner, but not much, and he preached from notes only. We went to the Vaughans' last night. Mrs. Vaughan was very warm about Hugh, particularly about the interest of his conversation, and thoughtful opinions, and she said the Dean said his writings were very thoughtful.

. . . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

Llandaff.
July 2nd (1894).

. . . . . .

We have been spending delightful days—seeing people moderately, arguing immoderately.

. . . . . .

Hugh and I are plunged into such a deep argument on the subject of human relations in relation to Divine relations (that is the simplest description one can give), that we have agreed to write our arguments and send them to each other.

. . . . . .

(*To her brother Arthur.*)

Lambeth Palace.
(1894.)

. . . . . .

All is well here except that most people are in the depths of despair, *e.g.*, Papa says he shan't ride any more because the road is slippery, and men in the street ask sometimes whether St. Paul would have ridden. But after that we had a very nice ride.

A—— keeps turning up at intervals—without being asked. Lucy and I were alone one night

last week, and tried to do automatic writing, she holding my hand, but all that happened was that "Westerton" declared that his father was a Member of Parliament, and lived in a small house in Pensden —which there's no such place.

. . . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

Farnham Castle,
Monday, Oct. 21.

My dearest Mother,

We did our journey all right, but the train at Victoria was very late and we only got to Waterloo just in time. I hurried and scuffled along the platform and into the carriage and into whose arms did I fall? Dr. Ord's!

He requested me to notice that he was looking at me severely. Finally when I got out he gave me strict injunctions not to lift my bag myself.

It is very nice here—and such a glorious place—and they are *very nice.*

Edie has vanished into thin air this morning, so I have been having a good turn at hieroglyphics. I am beginning to see a glimpse of daylight, but when a sentence is literally "that not be sitting down one" and means "that he might not remain alone" it requires some ingenuity.

We had very interesting talk about Miracles last night.

The Bishop does *love* having this place and this diocese. Don't tell A—— I said that or she'll think it means all sorts of things.

Your lovingest daughter,

M. B.

EGYPT

(*From Miss Gent to Mrs. Benson.*)

Hôtel Vesuve,
Naples.
Nov. 11 (1894).

. . . . . .

We are just going off to Church now—Maggie is looking very bright and jolly this morning, and has had a good night. She laughs a great deal—often at me when there is nothing else to laugh at! but we have had some very amusing times. *Do* be happy about her; she seems to me so different from what she was at Seaford.

. . . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

Mena House Hotel,
Cairo.
November 23 (1894).

. . . . . .

We haven't been doing much here except sitting in the verandah and looking at donkeys and camels and men, and hills turning pink and blue like the clouds, then fading to ash-colour and then getting rose again in the after-glow. That is so curious here,—the way everything glows, and dies out, and glows again.

. . . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

Helouan.
3rd Dec. (1894).

. . . . . .

My room was lovely to look at at Mena, the whole end of it was "harem" window, this sort of work—a sketch—(that doesn't look very clear)—and at

one side of the room was a door which opened straight on to the Sahara—you took about 5 steps and then were on the desert.

. . . . . .

There is a grand view of pyramids—they stand on a ridge behind which the sun sets—2 Dashûr pyramids, 2 or three at Sakkara—three at Gizeh and some poor attempt between, it is all like an advertisement—or sketches by Dean Stanley's aunt, as Hugh says.

. . . . . .

I was quite forgetting the long story I have to tell you. I told you that Q—— would be proposed to here? The first has occurred—and a most extraordinary one.

We stayed at the Hotel du Nil 3 days—a German sat next Q—— —she spoke to him 3 times I think. The first time she said "Do you speak English?"—and he said "Not enough for conversation"—and I think they made remarks about the weather. And another time they said something about how loud the Arabs read in the University. After we had been a week at Mena she received a violent love-letter signed Max——. He had found out her name and where she was going. The English was curious—he said he lost reason and tranquilisation, and wanted to "knee" before her—then he asked her either to write to him or come to the Gizeh museum the next afternoon. He said that he had since been over to Mena House to try to see her. I thought this might get troublesome, and happily a very nice Mrs. Douglas turned up whom we had met on the Orient—and I talked to her about it. She thought that nothing else would happen,

but that if he did come and ask for Q—— we had better tell Lady J——. Q—— had talked so little to the German at the Hotel du Nil, that we weren't even *sure* if it was he.

A few days after he appeared at dinner—the German—looking most forbidding. After dinner we went into the drawing-room. After we had been there a little while, he marched in and sat at the other end of the room behind a semi-transparent screen where he could dimly see Q——. A few minutes afterwards, he moved so that he could see her well. Then we went to bed. We were awfully relieved in the morning to find he was not staying at the hotel but had only come for dinner. It wasn't pleasant, was it, though some of it was rather funny —but I think it is all over now—he won't come here.

The Sphinx was much more wonderful even than I had remembered. It may sound bosh what I write about it, but Q—— felt exactly the same as I do—the extraordinary wisdom and *kindness* of it. It is impossible to believe unless you have seen it. Q—— expressed very much what I feel in saying that she should like to confess her sins to it—and the little sins wouldn't be too small for it to attend to. I know this sounds raving madness.

. . . . .

(*To Mrs. Benson from Miss R——.*)

Luxor.
December 23 (1894).

. . . . .

You would laugh to see how all the Arab population remember and greet Maggie. We are stopped

at every turn by some fascinating person in a turban who says "You not 'member me? *I* 'member *you*." Her own special donkey-boy almost wept to see her again. I think it is perhaps going a little too far when (as yesterday) she and I ride out each on a donkey, each with a boy—and *both* boys walk *all* the time with her and take no notice of me at all, except to give my donkey an occasional cut which sends it half a mile ahead. But it is the same with all the people we have met on the journey, and I am trying to get used to it!

CHAPTER VIII

EXCAVATION

It was in 1895 that Maggie took up the work of excavation at Luxor. It became the absorbing interest of the next two years, and she devoted much time to the study of Egyptian archæology. It was at this time too that she made one of her chiefest friendships with Miss Nettie Gourlay, whom she met in Egypt. Miss Gourlay joined her in the work of excavation, and they wrote together an account of their exploration, which was published by Mr. John Murray in 1899, under the title of *The Temple of Mut in Asher*. Her letters tell their own story :—

(*To her Mother.*)

Luxor.
Dec. 31, 1894.

. . . . . .

Finally when we got on our donkeys I hadn't finished bargaining about one thing, a blue net of beads for which the man asked 10/-, so they followed us. Then Mahommed acted as arbitrator, and the following conversation ensued as we were going on, the man following behind and at our side.

Mahommed to me "Take him for 6 shillin ?" (the blue net in his hand).

Owner of the net, "No, no, ten."

I refuse.

Mahommed, after a moment—" All right, take him for 5 ? "

I, " Too much."

Mahommed, after a little while, " Take him for 4 then ? "

Owner. " No, ten shillin."

Mahommed goes to the man and takes two necklaces from him, and holds them out with the blue net,

" So take him for four."

I—" But the man won't let me have them for four."

Mahommed, " It is all right." And the man takes his money like a lamb.

. . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

Luxor.
Jan. 2 (1895).

. . . . .

The Excavation *is* allowed. It's lovely—though the Museum claims everything that is found. I don't think much will be found of little things, only walls, bases of pillars, and possibly Cat-Statues. I am already in treaty for a tent. I shall feel rather like—

" Massa in the shade would lay
While we poor niggers toiled all day "—

for I am to have a responsible overseer, and my chief duty apparently will be paying. I find that I am beginning to be considered in the light of an Egyptologist.

. . . . .

Your questions—I like to do nothing better than to answer them. To begin with I am really immensely happy. The difference in feeling is so enormous now one begins to get better. Instead of idling as a pursuit, one has pursuits and idles for pleasure—and it is so much easier to do that in this climate. This afternoon I sent Kitty to the races —and lay in the garden under the half shade of palm leaves, and looked over one of my stories, and read up the last chapter of The Philanthropist, and planned some more, and thought about them, and had tea, and talked to some people who wandered round—and then came in to write. I haven't been at all active—in the morning I sit north of the gate opposite the Nile and draw camels, and have scraps of conversation with idle people who lounge round, and with scarab-sellers who bargain with Kitty, till she ends by buying 4 large false scarabs and an amulet for a shilling. Then the people are amusing and different. Two or three girls with whom we play knucklebones at all opportunities. Mrs. A—— is one of them—another confided to Kitty and me her trouble with her mother, who is thoroughly old-fashioned, and I have invited her to see you—if you can? Then M. Naville and Mr. Hogarth come from across the river, and we talk about Osiris. Just now, since I have been writing, the Coptic priest's son knocked at my door, having come to call upon me. The German consul, with whom I have had dealings, came to see me yesterday and gave me a blue Ushabti figure with "A happy new Year" written by himself round the stand of it.

. . . . .

(*To her Father.*)

Luxor Hotel.
Feb. 13 (1895).

My dearest Papa,

We have had such a splendid find at the Temple of Mut that I must write to tell you about it.

We were just going out there on Monday, when we met one of our boys who work there running to tell us that they had found a statue. When we got there they were washing it, and it proved to be a black granite figure about 2 feet high, knees up to its chin, hands crossed on them, one hand holding a lotus. The face is quite charming, and the hair very well done—the limbs are not shown but the surface is modelled according to the curves of the limbs.

Round the front and part of the side runs a hieroglyphic inscription—it is 18th dynasty.

The figure was too small to be left in the temple, so we were making arrangements for bringing it back here—until I go down, and take it to the Museum, when the Inspector of Antiquities (an Arab official) appeared and in spite of all we could say insisted on carrying if off to a little temple which they use as a store-house.

I wrote at once to M. Daressy, under whose supervision I was put, asking whether I might not have it here. I had not even had time properly to examine it. He came over yesterday and went to see it. He was exceedingly kind, said it was rather hard that I should not have "la jouissance de la statue que vous avez trouvé," which was just what I felt. So he translated the inscription for me and let me take it back. It has been outside the hotel

to-day to be looked at and photographed, and then I am going to have it in my room.

. . . . .

(*From E. F. Benson to Mrs. Benson.*)

(1896.)

. . . . .

We lament the fewness of our days on this boat and the shortness of them : she is doing her lessons in the morning, her sleep in the afternoon, her embroidery (chiffon) after tea, and after dinner we play bezique. There are only three other people on the boat, and they are dull and we don't find time to talk to them.

. . . . .

So that's the budget of news from your wandering children ; they don't feel at all as if they were going out in the dark, in fact there is a beautiful moon every night. The Great Bear is awfully upside down. Please tell Papa, I will try to remember to draw it to-night. Also unless my picture was right, and his wrong, the horses in Egypt at any rate are at the end of the chariot, where I drew them, and for which I was laughed at.

Maggie is wonderfully better. But I don't think anything has improved more than her mind, though she was always cheerful, happy and interested, and *the* most charming of companions. Really my family are very nice !

(*To her brother Arthur.*)

Luxor.
Jan. 4, 1896.

. . . . .

We had a good journey out here ; we endured grimly indeed on board the *Messagerie ;* it was far

from clean, I think those boats are; and the sea was rough. But we were not ill. Fred missed one meal, I believe, and made one or two of apples and wine—which reminded me of your quotation, "Stay me with apples, comfort me with flagons." On the last morning there came out a troop of pale people whom we had never seen during the voyage.

Our days up the Nile I believe you would have liked, though I know your mind does not incline to Egypt. We had only 3 people besides ourselves on a boat meant for thirty. They never spoke to us; except perhaps 3 times during 4 days. For those 4 days too we never landed; we sat in comfortable chairs and saw beautiful country pass us, with a smooth shining river all round.

Fred used to begin his work after breakfast, sitting in the front of the boat in the sun; I mine in the shade about 10. Then we lunched and then we slept, and after that we did our lessons and read novels till tea, and the same after; and we played Rubicon bezique after dinner; nobody interrupted us, and Fred made it clearly understood that I was not to point out objects of interest to him; so that I drew his attention to nothing, not even 18 large vultures quarrelling over a carcase.

Here he sometimes works in the morning, and always in the evening. For the rest of the day he goes over to the other side; where I join him sometimes in the afternoon. You ride through beanfields in flower, which give a heavenly scent, by pink hills, tumbled sandhills, and precipices full of blue shadow, to a temple, and then have tea; while 20 Arabs or more collect round with things to sell, for which one has to bargain wildly. Then

back across this river, where one sees an orange sunset one side, and night coming over the other half of the sky, with a moon above the temple, shining on the water.

. . . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

Luxor.
Jan. 12, 1896.

. . . . . .

There is such a nice expression here which the boys call "a laughing word." If you are asked for backsheesh you reply "feel mish-mish," which means "when the apricot ripens"—or never.

. . . . . .

There was a very funny incident yesterday, a fellah had been bothering two American ladies for backsheesh and rather frightened them. They reported this, and the Chaplain said he must be punished. So yesterday morning, he and one of the Americans sallied out, with a dragoman and a policeman, qualified by being the best runner in his corps. As they went, the policeman remarked that he hadn't brought his sword, but that if there were 10 men he could bring them all. When they got there, a long walk, they found a little boy only. The policeman swaggered until the little boy burst into tears, and had to be comforted. At last they found out the names of three men who had been ploughing in the field, and the policeman sat down on their doorsteps to wait until they returned from market, while the others came home. In the afternoon he appeared, with the three men walking meekly about 10 yards behind him; the guilty man was identified, and the others were allowed to

return. No apologies or compensation for having been arrested and made to walk about 6 miles! The other man, rather pleased at being an object of interest to the population, never made a protest, though nothing was *proved* against him, but went off quite meekly to prison.

. . . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

Assouan.
Jan. 23, 1896.

. . . . . .

While Fred and the Rivingtons went to see some tombs, I went to look for those agate-like stones on the island and was followed by a throng of mocking boys—viz., a boy who was carrying my things for me; a boy who feebly chased away the other boys from time to time, when I threatened him with no backsheesh, a very pretty little Bishari with a beautiful fringe, dressed in an earth-coloured old sheet and with strings of shells and amber round his neck; a boy who said he was a Syce. Another boy in no way distinguished and a *most* irritating boy on a donkey. Finally I got so worked up, that I chastised one with a parasol, and by guile getting the stick of the other and the ornament of his donkey, I threw them away. Afterwards they were a little quieter.

. . . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

Hatasu,
Nearing Luxor.
Jan. 26, 1896.

. . . . . .

Your bonnet-box has been housing 18 young sparrows most of the day. A man at Edfu had

about 2 dozen on a string. I took them from him —he gave them quite meekly; but I didn't know whether I should be able to keep them without giving him anything. However, we were firm, and the population gradually veered round in our favour, and finally said he was a bad man, and suggested we should give him a stick for backsheesh, so we flourished a buffalo whip in his face. McPherson * acted like a "Trojan" and unpacked the bonnet-box to put them in, and cut them free which was an awful job, and I think I could hardly have done it myself. Then they all romped all over the cabin —2 were so much hurt that we killed them, one was killed by something falling on it, 2 flew away, and at Esneh, she went out and bought a beautiful Soudanese basket for the other 18. I shall let out all that I think fit into the garden at Luxor, and keep the others for a day or two; if they don't seem likely to recover we must kill them—but at present most look extremely perky and eat quantities of bread crumbs.

. . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

Mut. 4 P.M.
Jan. 31 (1896).

. . . . . .

I must send you a little line from here to tell you we have begun. Yesterday morning, Jeanie † came with me, and a Miss Gourlay who is going to help; we found a howling mob of boys and men, and I offered the reis-ship to a man of last year, at 3 piastres a day, regular wages, instead of 4—it was

* My sister's maid. † Lady Jane Lindsay.

accepted with gratitude. We hadn't much difficulty in engaging men, but when we came to boys they all began to shout their own names, and press up to us. We took up three different positions—first drawing a line over which they might not come—but they did—then in a gateway, trusting to the reis and the men to keep them back, which they couldn't. Then on an elevated stone, from which all the rest of the time I was hurling small boys. We took the first 15. names suggested (5 men, 3 boys to each)—about then first Fred, then Mr. Hogarth arrived and helped to chase people away, and we settled to work.

. . . . .

(*Lady Jane Lindsay to Mrs. Benson.*)

Assuan.
Feb. 1st (1896).

How I have wished you could have stepped into my shoes when they walked about Luxor Hotel Garden in search of Maggie last Tuesday. She *is* looking so well—and is in highest spirits about her own health—I wish you could just see her, so full of vigour and quick movements.

By greatest luck they had just returned from a trip to Assuan, and now she has commenced digging. I went with her the first day and witnessed a scene I would have given much to "snap"—Maggie the centre of a howling mob with a copy-book in one hand and courbash in the other—some score of individuals beyond the number she desired, being determined to get their names inscribed as labourers. Now and then she retired to try and stand on a

place of vantage—but unless one was hung from a ceiling, there is here no possibility *ever* of getting out of reach of the natives.

I watched and listened to the screams, thinking no solution *could* ever be reached when, lo—it suddenly appeared to be all over—and her book was filled with the names of grinning owners, who immediately began picking the ground. Yesterday I heard already there had been a find—a man's head in basalt—and some other little things.

(*To her Mother.*)

Luxor.
Feb. 7 (1896).

. . . . .

I lunched at Mut to-day. A few minutes after I had begun, my reis came—such a picturesque figure in a long, longsleeved rough brown garment with a long palm stick in his hand, and rather a fine rugged face. He was holding an earthenware bowl in both hands, and it appeared it was for me full of curds and whey. I took some, and when I had finished, sent the remains of my lunch, which happened to be rather large, out to him and Mahommed. Several other men sat round and ate with them, and one of them took some of it, and the bowl, when they had finished, to the rest of the men who sat further off. They are always so exceedingly polite about sharing their food with one another.

We have been trying to get a great corner-stone up to-day. We had one good but short crowbar, another which had been bent and appeared sickle-like. At one point when they were all tugging at

a rope it broke and ten or eleven of them went flat down shouting with laughter. Immediately another man picked up the broken cord, unravelled a bit of it and made a belt for himself of it, looking at me with a smile.

. . . . .

Much love to every one. Please thank Lucy very much for her letter—but say I shall just wear whichever hat I like—and if her thoughts of her little sister in a strange land centre upon *hats*—no climax strong enough occurs to me.

Your lovingest daughter,
M. B.

(*To her Mother.*)

Luxor.
Feb. 9 (1896).

. . . . . .

This is just a line to report progress. We found a rose-granite Osiride sitting statue of Rameses II. yesterday.* *Not* a portrait statue probably, but very nice; the bottom part was completely rotted, so that it broke in half, and the knees and one shoulder were broken off, but the top part and face are very good. Also we have got the largest cat—in pieces—that I have ever seen; the head is perfect, disk half broken, but uræus perfect, it belongs to the colossal feet. We have now got down to the corner-stone, and are going to dig under it for deposit to-morrow. Every day before yesterday when we thought we had got to the bottom another layer of stone appeared.

. . . . .

* This statue was given to my sister, and is now at Tremans.

The Duke of Cambridge has just gone—taking all our butter with him—none for tea, but there remain an Austrian Archduke and at least 5 Countesses, 1 Viscountess, and a few Earls and some lesser lights. The Comptons have come back which is nice—she is so delightful.

. . . . .

(*From E. F. Benson to his Mother.*)

Luxor.
Feb. 14 (1896).

. . . . .

Maggie is much better; doesn't get tired and was so lively the other night at dinner with the Whites and Lady Galloway, that you wouldn't have known your own daughter. I think the winter has just crystallized all the cure set up before.

. . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

Luxor Hotel.
Feb. 14, 1896.

. . . . . .

Such a lot has been happening, and all Wednesday was so much taken up that I couldn't write to you. Even now I am quite fussed.

On Tuesday I went out about 10.45 to get the stone moved over one angle of the wall, that was done without very much difficulty, but lo-en-behole while they were chipping away the earth out came half a statue in alabaster of a little Scribe.

The thing was opened at lunch-time and the Scribe was found, so though I had intended to go

back to lunch, I sent for lunch, and rested in an angle of the wall with my eye on that corner. Fred was to come at 2.30. About 2 we resumed work, and soon came to another stone; following that up with care, another little statue, broken and headless, and so on and on; when Fred came, I couldn't go, for they were coming faster and faster, and by 4 o'clock there were 2 kneeling statues, one black granite, one alabaster, 2 more squatting statues of black granite, beside the half-alabaster one, two single sitting statues, and one double one of a man and his wife—parts of 8 figures in all, and a pair of black granite feet but only one head—that one exactly like the Wooden Man of Boulak.

Then there descended on us M. Legrain, Government Excavator of Karnak, and upbraided me with having taken all the things to the hotel, saying he should take all the little statues to his store-house. I very nearly wept, and called Fred, who was slightly rude. M. Legrain became much more polite and finally said if we chose to take the whole responsibility of their safety, we could take them back, and he would write to De Morgan. So we did. Though they are broken, they are mostly inscribed, and Mr. Newberry who has been looking over them says they are very interesting. He is coming to read the whole lot to-morrow. One is an inspector of recruits, one tutor of the royal children, especially Prince Thothmes. One keeper of the treasures, one a judge and his wife, one a judge.

Since then we have found another which fits to the feet inscribed, and a piece of the alabaster kneeling one, and another body. Also a large royal statue in black granite, partly defaced but very fine.

Also a rare twelfth dynasty cartouche and piece of inscription on alabaster.

. . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

Luxor.
Feb. 20, 1896.

. . . . .

I had a crisis moment the other day of looking back and seeing what an extraordinary change there is in all one's ways and feelings even since coming out. That all the health measures are not invalid measures but precautionary now—that one's life is doing things with rests, not *vice versâ*. That no one asks about my health now and so forth. It *is* funny and nice.

. . . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

Luxor.
Feb. 23 (1896).

. . . . .

The Wantages have got the dearest baby gazelle I ever saw and the most hideous chameleon. You would love it ; it is a terrible dry thing, that looks as if it was badly made out of green linen, roughly sewn up, with horrible cynical eyes that turn every way but never together, and a thick pink tongue that can be accurately shot at a fly to the distance of 5 inches.

Perhaps I shall bring back a Soudanese kitten, it is a different species, and I have only once seen and once heard of it in England. I shouldn't keep it except to solace me here, where I simply thirst

for my cats and Taffy *—and dispose of it in England at any rate if Persis didn't like it.

Our hole goes on and on, and can only be got at by a very little boy with a trowel. We have built the Chamber door up with stones for Sunday, on which I have written my initials with sand and a guardian is appointed. In other words we rolled great stones to the door of it and departed, sealing the stones and setting a watch—not literally that. There may be a deposit at the bottom, and in any case the chamber is quite unlike anything in any other temple. I was there most of the day yesterday and paid wages in the evening. The men are getting so polite since.

. . . . . .

SO many thanks for the photograph of Stevenson —I do so like to have it. I found quite unexpectedly that Miss Gourlay *absolutely* shared my sentiments about Stevenson. Also she is immensely interested in metaphysical questions. I like her extremely; not the least—not the slightest touch of Schwärmerei but thorough interested liking.

. . . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

Rameses III.
March 20, 1896.

. . . . . .

Fred has really been the dearest boy all through. He says that after I am well, he shall advertise himself as companion to an invalid lady—really I will recommend him highly.

Things are so exciting here—all the morning we

* My sister's collie.

have been passing post and tourist boats with barges fastened to them, going up to Girgeh to meet the troops. We towed two barges as far down as Girgeh—to which troops go by train. Yesterday, going to Abydos, they passed strings of camels laden with corn going up. After being here all this time one cannot but feel thankful that they are going against these fanatic tribes, who raid villages, under the control of a drunken Calipha—the thing is so full of savagery. All the season of course one felt it was coming nearer and nearer—one was constantly hearing of camels loaded with ammunition going into the Soudan being stopped. Mr. Walrond, the Goschens' friend, caught seven—yet of course no one expected it so soon.

Just before I left Luxor I had a talk with an old man called there Nikola de Khartoum, who was there when it fell—saw Gordon cut to pieces, had his own throat cut, but escaped in the darkness of the night and was taken on board the first boat that reached Khartoum.

. . . . .

(*To her brother Arthur.*)

Hotel Angleterre,
Cairo.
March 31, 1896.

. . . . .

Will it make you take more interest in my scribe to tell you that he isn't dogheaded or pigheaded—but that he came out after some thousands of years of burying with a young, calm smiling face, and a lotus in his hand, and that, being a scribe of the royal household he describes himself as "one who

shuts his mouth about what his eyes have seen." I shall have a cast of him sent home in all probability —so you will make nearer acquaintance. He is of some value—worth £150 or £200—so probably the museum will keep the statue itself.

. . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

Aix.
May 15 (1896).

. . . . .

I like her * more and more—I haven't liked any one so well for years. She is so much more free than almost any woman I know from anything small or cheap or common or coarse. It's funny—I can't help contrasting her in some ways with T——. I don't know why, except that T—— is the last person I began to know—and it's so strange in T—— how everything—troubles, pains, even good things, almost the best things—seem twisted to an egotistic end. So *exactly* the reverse with Nettie—I never knew any one whose theory of life so disregarded enjoyment—too much I think—yet though I don't suppose she is happy, you couldn't call her unhappy because in a sense, she is bigger than that.

. . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

Aix.
May 18 (1896).

. . . . .

I have got a *lovely* new French hat, which you will like and Lucy may think vulgar.

* Miss Gourlay.

Nettie—how can I keep you up in this, for it changes so every day—oh, I *hope* you'll like her—you can't help it if you know her, but she is so horribly shy. She is only 33, but she makes me feel like a little girl sometimes—and you know I don't do that particularly easily—I feel essentially, I mean, the same age as Lucy, for instance—but when Nettie has had bad times, she has had to get through them alone ; it is so unnatural to her to be unreserved, and I don't think circumstances have aided it. She told me she hadn't ever talked so much to any one before. Oh, Mother, it's so odd to me to make a friendship like this—generally there has been something in the way—mostly I've not been sure of the other person, and generally I've had a radical element of distrust. But here one can't help trusting her *absolutely*, and it's only myself I distrust. She is so much bigger, and so much finer and more delicate in mind than most women. We were talking about S—— yesterday, and she *abhors* the clash of temperaments—and then she has a much bigger patience and gentleness. I don't think her perfect—preserve me from it ! but there's nothing small nor hard about her. There—I wanted you to know. Do you remember my saying you didn't like my friends ? and there was a truth in that—but I think I'm ceasing to be attracted by the brute. You know what I mean.

What did I cross out ? Something like this—that it's inconceivable to me how people get on who haven't you.

Your *lovingest* daughter,
MARGARET BENSON.

(*To her Mother.*)

Aix.
May 20 (1896).

. . . . .

Yes you will like Nettie, if she will speak more than 5 consecutive words. She reminds me of Aunt Nora in some ways—also do you know that thing of Jeremy Taylor's on a " Young Lady " ? one sentence that I loved in that is awfully like her, that " She had not much of the outside of godliness, but was hugely careful for the spirit and power of it."

. . . . .

She was down here all yesterday, *i.e.* for luncheon, for tea, and for dinner—you can't think how new this sort of thing is to me. Except you and Tan, I don't know any one in the world I admire so much —(this is sober not emotional). It amused me that I dreamt last night I found that she was a Bible Christian, and though I felt I couldn't approve of Bible Christianism, I was sure if she was one that it must be all right.

. . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

Aix.
May 25 (1896).

. . . . .

I see I gave you dates all wrong. Sunday is 14th so if I waited a clear ten days I shouldn't be home till the eve of my birthday. I feel as if I should rather be hurried into being 31 if that were so.

. . . . .

AIX

(*To her Mother.*)

Aix.
May 30, 1896.

. . . . .

I had the whole afternoon with Nettie. I have begun educating her on the subject of talking and unreserve—and reduced her to despair by saying that I thought over everything I was going to say to her about 5 times before I said it or wrote—(a good deal of truth in that) after which for some time all I could get out of her was " what a *brute* I must be ! "

. . . . .

(*To her Father.*)

Aix-les-Bains.
May 31, 1896.

. . . . .

Thank you so much for looking out that note on the first verses of S. John for me. There is another parallelism I want to draw out—the end of the Gospel and the end of the Apocalypse—both ending with the promise of the Second Coming, and both with the warrant of the testifier, a sort of seal in the one case on the truth of the relation, and in the other on the truth of the revelation—like the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ in S. Paul's Epistles—and then the extraordinary touch of reality, if it is the same man who ends the Gospel by " If I will that he tarry till I come "—and the Revelation, " Even so come, Lord Jesus." It all fits so strangely together. Do you think I could draw out a parallel on these lines ?

. . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

Pugny Les Corbières,
Aix.
June 5, 1896.

. . . . . .

I have got such a bad pen that I *can't* write well. It's perfectly true, by the way, about my writing copperplate to Papa—I feel it myself—also I know where he wants place and date put—it was ages ago he taught me, so I do it accordingly.

I dreamt of you, that I came home and found you hadn't troubled to read my letter about the doctor's report and wouldn't either.

. . . . . .

Nettie's education is getting on, thank you—*excellently* in some ways, and she talks much more when we are alone—but relapses into almost complete silence with anybody else there. No she will be horribly shy of Papa, but it must be done.

. . . . . .

(*To Miss Gourlay.*)

Lambeth Palace.
June 23 (1896).

. . . . . .

The Bishops are having their devotional—or as the porter here calls it their "happy day." It is very embarrassing, because they are all about the house and garden, but are not supposed to speak until after lunch. At the same time if you meet, as I did, a Bishop you know quite well on the stairs, you can't pretend not to see him. I have been lurking in by-ways of the garden with Taffy, trying to avoid them. Ra * with Lucy after him, rushed

* Persian cat.

into the middle of them while they were meditating in the drawing-room. I am getting to love Ra—there is a mixture of sentimentality and delirious gaiety about him.

. . . . . .

(*To Miss Gourlay.*)

Lambeth Palace,
July 1st (1896).

. . . . . .

I think I was right in my conclusions about Miss F——, for she has written me a savage letter, without any beginning, saying that she does wish to see me. I am *very* sorry for her. How we shall proceed now *I* don't know. I think she is one of the people who want clashes of temperaments, and like to be savage to the people they like—a little like Lucy Snowe in some ways.

. . . . . .

(*To Miss Gourlay.*)

Lambeth Palace,
July 2, 1896.

. . . . . .

I had a nightmare-like half-hour last night when it was discovered, just before dinner, that a note had come in the morning from a rather principal lady, who put off at the last moment, and asked whether her daughter should come instead; as it hadn't been answered, we didn't know who *would* come, and I had to make 2 new plans, 1 in case the daughter came, the other if she didn't. When I had done that, it was found that a violent Radical was being taken in by a member of the Government;

so I had to make another, and then found a husband sitting by his wife. By the time I had corrected that, people were already beginning to arrive, and my plans were in pencil, and illegible to anyone but myself. However, they got in all right, but it's no wonder that my own particular nightmare is of that order—of a lot of people to dinner and everything unarranged. I saw a letter from you waiting for me in the middle of it, which had a calming effect on the nerves.

. . . . .

(*To Miss Gourlay.*)

Lambeth Palace.
July 3, 1896.

. . . . .

It's odd, when one gets tired, the way in which vague fears and depressions and feelings of powerlessness, which I got used to in the last 2 years, come dimly back, just in the way clouds grow and fade on a hot day. It's rather a comfort to know how physical those things are.

I couldn't go down to the Eton Mission yesterday as I wanted, for it was such a horrid day. Hugh wants me to come on Sunday (which naturally I'm not going to do) when they have he says "a sort of Sacred Flower Show."

. . . . .

Oh you don't know the difference it makes to know you—and how much more it makes me care for what happens to other people. Do you understand? I daresay not,—but I am quite serious.

. . . . .

LAMBETH

(*To Miss Gourlay.*)

Lambeth Palace.
July 12 (1896).

. . . . .

It is a heavy, hot day here, and I am rather tired and feel very cross—not about anything particular, but in the sort of condition when one feels it would be very undesirable to be contradicted. I went to the Abbey with Mrs. Mylne this morning, and came back in an absolutely crowded boat, after standing for a long time on a crowded pier.

Then we took Taffy into the garden, and he having discovered my father sitting in a quiet place to read, fetched a sort of young tree—quite black—and, as my father said, threw it at him several times. I caught sight of him flourishing it round and over my father's book, and had to go to the rescue.

. . . . .

(*To Miss Gourlay.*)

Addington Park.
July 14 (1896).

. . . . .

It's deliciously sunshiny and cool after London, and I'm writing out of doors under a big cedar, which is the nicest thing here: we always camp out under it in summer, and it's so big that you can have two or three sets of people talking about different things without disturbing each other at all. I wish you were here, but as this is a week of severe discipline in that way, it's not much good *wishing* anything. Arguments have been raging. Hugh and his friend have been at the retreat together

hearing Father Maturin's addresses. I hadn't been here for 10 minutes, before Hugh had got out his notes and begun to read them. He would hardly let me ask questions, and when I objected to things, I was forced after a bit to put notes down on paper to be argued afterwards, because he wouldn't let me argue at the time. So it raged all through dinner, and after dinner, until Hugh grew too impatient, and said he wanted to talk about something simple like strawberries and cream. So we came out here, and of course began again at once and went on till 10. We have had a little turn at it this morning in my room.

The arguments turned chiefly on

1. Whether you could take the history of the Old Testament in any true way as symbolic of the history of a soul.

2. Marriage.

3. Whether a priest's life is required to be holier than any other life.

4. Asceticism and discipline.

5. Whether a religious life should detach you from the world—in the large sense.

6. Suffering—what is the cause of it ?

These were the main points. I found myself supported on the whole by Mr. Marshall, the friend—which was a comfort, as Hugh has a wild way of attributing all sorts of arguments to one that one doesn't believe in, and mad metaphors that one wouldn't use.

. . . . .

ETON

(To Miss Gourlay.)

Eton College,
Windsor.
August 6 (1896).

DEAREST,

I abstained from writing this afternoon until I had cleared off some letters that were on my conscience, particularly one to A——. I think what is the matter with A—— is that she is partly morbid, partly overworked, and partly that she had, and perhaps unconsciously cultivates, a greater susceptibility to pain than to pleasure of every kind. She really feels things, but more than is natural—and she isn't aware that feeling them so much is abnormal and undesirable. I don't know whether there is any possible treatment for that kind of thing—it makes her go through much unnecessary suffering.

My dear you are really absurd about those patterns—it is exactly like the scene at your dressmakers—why shouldn't I be allowed to take an interest in your dresses? And why should I be unable to have any sympathy with the things you are doing? Please remember my abnormal developments in the way of stoles. But if I can't have any sympathy with them, I can anyhow have all the more with your doing them. This place is really charming—I have been sitting in Arthur's garden this morning, doing German, and this afternoon writing letters. It has a view of Eton, and is close to the river. And a small bird which I think was a flycatcher, insufficiently fledged, came and sat on a pole near me. We—Fred and I,—are going back to-morrow evening.

Dearest, I am so glad you are really interested

in that book. I have such heaps more to say if only I could bring it into form. I want to talk over the last chapter with you dreadfully—I want now to write a series of introductions and a series of conclusions.

Well I must stop, Dearest, I want to see you.

Yours, M. B.

(*To Miss Gourlay.*)

Addington Park.
August 10 (1896).

DEAREST,

As you object to my writing before resting I must do it now before lunch. I was very glad to get your letter this morning. I had been dreaming of you—as usual unsatisfactorily—namely that we had gone to Egypt for a week only, and nonsense of that kind. Dearest, I think there's a Jesuitical and casuistical strain in you—I always notice it when you begin to talk about fundamental truth, and yet I should have thought it alien to the Scotch nature. And the moral of my being uncomfortable is not really that you shouldn't tell me, but that you shouldn't get chills, and should take tonics. No I don't think the normal condition of mankind need be to feel flat, and I *wish* it needn't be yours. I'm quite sure you would find it cheering to write the Princess's story, if you only had time to begin—I have come to the conclusion that if you had anything to do which was not even remotely connected with your conscience or your duty, it would be good for you. Only I suppose with such a perverted nature as yours, the very fact that it wasn't distinctively

your duty would then get on your conscience. I don't know what is to be done!

I have been doing German with rising spirits—(1) because they have so singularly little to say for themselves, and that little is so controvertible—(2) because I am past p. 401 and in the Acts next to which comes the Johannine question in which I am really interested. After that, I went down to the farm and inspected the little rabbits. They are perfectly sweet just now—square and solid and fluffy. Shall I bring them when I come? I am also feeling better about Addington—I do like it when it doesn't rain, but it generally does. The ghosts are losing all distinctness, yet there's an indefinite feeling of them which a little weighs in the early morning and the evening.

I must write to Hugh also before lunch, and *force* him to tell me exactly what his plans are—if he doesn't I shall arrange without reference to him. No I didn't suppose there was a possibility of your coming—but I didn't want to let the merest chance go without asking. Dearest, I must stop. I haven't written a single other letter.

Yours,

M. B.

(*To Miss Gourlay.*)

Addington Park.
August 12, 1896.

DEAREST,

This will be a most stupid letter, for it's after lunch again, and there are a series of interruptions. Ra distinguished himself by bringing in a pheasant yesterday, and in consequence he has got to be

tethered. Beth is rather in a state of mind about him, as she is deeply attached to him, and had such a high opinion of his power of self-control with regard to pheasants—and with mistaken confidence he took it to her room. I have just been fitting his collar on, and I have to go out to tether him in a minute or two—so this will be incoherent.

I wonder whether you are writing that I can come on Friday, or whether you think it's better to put it off. I have not heard from Hugh at all. I don't at all approve of your working as hard as you can now in order to get clear time afterwards. I think I would rather have a living friend, even with a conscience than a dead one without—don't do too much, dearest. I shall *have* to do lessons sometimes you know—and then you can do some of your things.

I have been to tether Ra in the intervals of this letter, and the post has been called for once so I must stop. I'm sorry it's so stupid, dearest.

Goodbye—it really is about time that we should meet again—it seems to me several weeks since we did.

Yours,
M. B.

(*To Miss Gourlay.*)

Addington Park.
Aug. 23 (1896).

My dearest,

I think there may be a chance of sending this and so I am going to write anyhow, and if not I shall keep it to go on with to-morrow. Did you

get my letter this morning, I wonder? It was a very stupid one I know, for I had "no mind" as Mohammed said—not that I have much to-day, I have been too much battered by Hugh's arguments ever since I got home. We had marriage of clergy, position of women (on which I regret to say he said that no statistics would convince him)—Confession as usual, and Asceticism as usual. That lasted all dinner-time, and directly afterwards we had the pantomime until prayers.

To-day we have had milder subjects. I spent the morning in bed, for as it was too wet to go to Church I thought I would make the most of the time, and had Beth and the cat for a short service consisting of two lessons and some of Christina Rossetti. Besides that I did some German and some novel-reading, and some conversation with you—but the conversation might have been of a completer kind—and it would have been an improvement too if I could have had the postman sitting on my bed and showing me how to write. I have been telling Beth about him and she is deeply impressed with his intelligence.

Lucy is here and very cheerful. She has been reading Fred's book, and though she hasn't got far, yet she feels about it as I do—I'm very glad of that, for it's so impossible with one's own family to know how far one is prejudiced. She talked on last night in my room chiefly on the subject of how odd she thought Hugh was, and how dangerous she thought his whole position! I don't understand it a bit. He is quite good with the people he has to deal with, but otherwise his religion appears to be entirely dissociated from anything to do with humanity.

His plans of future life seem to include no element of relation to the people he will have to deal with.

Dearest, I have wondered sometimes whether you think I talk to you about the private affairs of other people more than I ought? Do you ever think that? I wish you would tell me. I like to tell you as much as I think I may—I wonder you are not bored with it sometimes—but once or twice it has struck me that you thought I ought not to tell you so much.

I think I must stop. Good-bye, dearest. Mind you say how you are when you write.

There's a chance of posting. I must stop.

Yours,

M. B.

(*To Miss Gourlay.*)

Addington Park.
August 28 (1896).

DEAREST,

I generally put off writing to you until I have got through such letters as my conscience obliges me to write. The advantage of it is that it makes me hurry up about the other letters.

Dearest, I wish you would get all right. Why can't you make up your mind to going for a walk? I don't want you to take a bit more exercise than is good for you—or is it that you hate going by yourself? I don't like your feeling like this at all. Are you well again or not? Need you do so much business—can't any of it be left until your sisters come home—or would that be lax? Oh dearest, I wish we lived a little nearer one another during this part of the year. Yet I suppose an impartial person

would not see that there was much to grumble at in the position—especially with Egypt ahead—nor should I if you would be quite well and cheerful. You mistake the use of backgrounds rather. They have got to be a source of consolation when the foreground is filled up with things you don't like. So the fact of having business to do ought not to crowd it out.

Miss N—— has had a nervous breakdown. That rather shakes my faith in her as the ideal representative of the old-maid principle,—I don't think with only butter and scarabs on her mind she ought to break down nervously. I hope your dress has got on well—does it look nice? I know you'll be beautiful in it.

Oh dearest, I wish I knew the Gaelic language, for I believe you are able to say all sorts of affectionate things in it which English can't express. I do want you in bodily presence very badly, my dearest.

Yours, M. B.

(*To Miss Gourlay.*)

Addington Park.
August 29 (1896).

MY DEAREST,

I think your writing to me at three different periods during the day must have had a considerable astral effect—not only during the day, but I couldn't for a long time stop thinking of you and of Cecil at night, and finally dreamt long dreams of you, which were nicer than usual. Yesterday also I made a plan that if this month becomes impossible, or if you get really depressed (and you know you are bound by solemn oaths to tell me if you are), we must both

have business in London, then we can meet at Lambeth. I am sure I can invent business quite easily—business that shan't take me too long, and you *must* manage to invent it too. Dearest, I wish you wouldn't load your conscience with such things as the idea that you are lazy. It's just that sort of thing I meant by the impossible standard. Besides in that sort of way I don't think I am physically less fit than you are—quite the reverse. The lack of energy in you isn't a moral defect but a nervous one. Do you for instance feel it in the same way in Egypt when you are really well? And the fact of having it on your conscience that you are lazy acts again on nerves. I am *sure* this is true. What would you do with anybody else in the same circumstances? You know you wouldn't tell them to rouse themselves. You must be reasonable about this. Then you see it is difficult in this way, that if you have no time for a long time together in which you can choose what you will do—because you always have things that you *must* do—you get out of the habit of choosing for yourself. That is obscurely put—do you see what I mean? In my case, for instance, I can carry on from day to day, with only accidental interruptions, the things I want to do.

Dearest, there is another thing I want to write about because I didn't talk about it at the time. Have you given up altogether that theory that your life is to be so arranged that you may find out how little you can do with? I see that may be so for a time—but I don't see how that belief in a plan of life-long starvation is consistent with a trust in the fatherhood of God. I can see too that that may

happen on one side—that one may be cut off from certain kinds of things, in order that one may find out the fulness of God in other ways—but with all the infinity and fulness of God round one, that one should be *simply* meant to learn abstinence as a final lesson of life I can't believe. My dearest, I can't fundamentally grudge any pain in life which has made you what you are, but I must think that God has a fulness and joy and inspiration of life for you which he means you to gain. I must stop. Good-bye.

My dearest,
Yours, M. B.

(*To Miss Gourlay.*)

Addington Park.
Aug. 30 (1896).

DEAREST,

I have just been reading over the sonnets you read me, and some others. I do like some *very* much. I want you to read me them again. Hugh went off yesterday. We went a drive and had a long conversation about Cowley and other things. I think his desire for Cowley is perhaps rather cooling; and his own brotherhood, with hide-and-seek in cassocks, attracts him more. He was much more human and less aggressive, and said that if I would have a sisterhood in the same place he would certainly allow the very very silliest and most hysterical girls to come to the sisters to confess instead of the clergy. I have found out my German critic in a pure *dishonesty* this morning—there's no excuse which can be brought for it, or any other possible explanation. I have an idea for another

small chapter in the criticism chapter, but I'm not sure whether it is too complicated to explain in a letter. Roughly it is this : Compare the attitude of the German critics to the Copernican system and the Kantian Method, (the two last being a very well-worn comparison) both of which take, so to speak, a new centre for their theory of the same facts known before ; and the proof of each is that the theory so turned upside-down harmonises with the facts better than before. Just so German critics substituted the idea of literary dependence for that of historical dependence, *e.g.* if two authors agree, one had borrowed from the other ; if they apparently disagree, one is arguing against the other—where the earlier theory would say that they agreed because the truth had been taught in this way by Christ to His followers. Then comes the question as to whether this really explained facts better, when I shall raise the objection that this is untrue to human nature, because the men who teach the highest truth cannot be chiefly inspired by polemical feeling and literary dishonesty. This is badly explained and probably quite incomprehensibly vague without instances.

Your condition about clothes sounds serious—but you really mustn't try to make a compromise between warmth and economy, because that is certain to lead to chills and dyspepsia and depression and all sorts of undesirable consequences. I wish your conscience could be made more active on these points instead of some others. My dearest I should think it would be much nearer selfishness if you weren't what you call egotistical at times. I think you must be able to realise by now that I want to know something about you—and you mustn't keep

me away from you by your fear of being egotistical. I wish I could come and sit in the wood with you this afternoon.

Lucy and I are going to my father to represent to him all the points we don't understand in something he has written. It makes me nervous to criticise people's things. I must stop.

Yours,

M. B.

(*To Miss Gourlay.*)

Addington Park.
Sept. 14, 1896.

. . . . .

A discussion has been raging downstairs about Deceased Wife's Sister—and such-like things. Lucy's position is grand.

1. The laity needn't give way to the clergy, because they constitute the Church as much as the clergy do.

2. The Clergy must give way to the Laity, because otherwise there will be a split.

The reason why the clergy must give way, and not the Laity, is because the Laity have more commonsense. I expect you would agree with her thoroughly.

. . . . .

(*To Miss Gourlay.*)

Addington Park.
Sept. 16 (1896).

NETTIE,

I protest against your conduct. You promised to come on Saturday unless people were coming—now you say you have a feeling that you

won't get away till Monday, because there are things to fit into this week. Which I totally object to (1) because it implies a fatalist view; (2) because having promised me to come here, you subsequently made an arrangement to spend the whole day in lunching at Andover; (3) because this will only give you Sunday to do these things in, which is not allowable unless they are works of necessity, of charity or of piety (and I'm certain they don't come under the last head). What sort of a conscience it is which relieves itself by Sabbath-breaking and promise-breaking I can't conceive! Moreover, I seem to remember that you promised to find out if you could see Sir John Williams on Saturday, and I have heard no more about that. Have you done anything about it? What on earth is there to prevent you making another luncheon engagement, and not coming until Wednesday or later? And I know too the sort of condition you'll arrive in, if you try to complete all the duties you can possibly invent before you come. This is the part of you that the name Janet corresponds to, which is practically equivalent to Martha. If, therefore, you make up your mind to come on Monday with "no kindness undone and no duty unfulfilled," I shall search out and mark a few copies of the *Christian* on Sabbath-breaking and Promise-breaking but make no further allusion to the subject, which is a painful one.

MARGARET BENSON.

P.S.—I dreamt last night that you considered me a bore, and had done so for some time. I shall consider that dream prophetic and retrospective.

ADDINGTON

(*To Miss Gourlay.*)

Addington Park.
Sept. 18 (1896).

My dearest, how could I have intended that idiotic letter to be taken altogether seriously. I thought at one moment of putting a large J * on it, but I didn't think it was necessary, and I am afraid my letter yesterday will have made it sound still more serious. The only element of seriousness that there was in it was directed not against you, but your conscience. I'm so sorry, and especially compunctious at having made you crowd more things into these days, which wasn't at all my intention. I wonder whether the letter I wrote to you yesterday will have changed your mind at all.

Dearest, I won't go into it all because I think it will be easier to explain when we meet. "It's puzzling work, writing"—but I'm dreadfully sorry to have worried you. Of course I shall love it if you come to-morrow—but if you don't, I shall hope it is that the second letter did partly destroy the impression of the first.

Dearest, you don't think I should have written quite like that if I had meant it altogether seriously.

Yours, M. B.

(*To a friend.*)

(1896.)

MY DEAR D——,

I hope and think you won't mind that C—— has told me a little about how unhappy you have

* J=joke.

been of late. And I am so awfully sorry for you. She told me, because you said to her that you would have told me about it if I had come to L——. I wish I had—especially if it would have been any use this way—and I wish we could meet now. Of course there isn't anything one can *say* which is of any good, only the very talking about such troubles is of use sometimes, because one sees more really their proper proportions, and one does see that this particular suffering is only part of a much bigger thing; whereas if one thinks of it alone, it seems to swallow up the world. And then besides the fact that certain kinds of suffering and loss are the *normal* lot does make them better,—though not in the crude way it's put sometimes. I mean it does show one that one isn't chosen out for a peculiarly painful, or useless, or profitless part in life—but that it is a part of what every one has to make life out of—and also that the normal hopes and joys *will* come, as well as the normal troubles. Oh dear, this sounds hortatory almost, as well as deeply obscure—don't mind it please—only think that it means I *am* sorry, and if I could help I would.

Your affectionate,

MARGARET BENSON.

(*To Miss Gourlay.*)

Addington Park.
Oct. 3 (1896).

MY DEAREST,

I was *so* glad to get your letter this morning. Dearest, I think the things we did have a much more important place than the things we intended to do; and above all it does me good when you say

you have been happy. I don't know that I quite understand your attitude to people—not as regards my mother, but I mean as regards friends. I wish you would write about it. I will write what I mean to-morrow—to-day there's no time and I am very stupid. It's something of this sort I mean, that I don't want to have the part of my life that concerns other people separate from you—that if it's not to be separate, you must come into that with me, as you do into *things* in which I am interested—so that to love one another should reinforce both our powers of loving other people. That was what I meant about R——. I felt that because I loved you I couldn't be disloyal to her. Do you see ?

Goodbye dearest,

Yours,

M. B.

(*To Miss Gourlay.*)

Addington Park.
Oct. 4 (1896).

My dearest, there may be a chance of sending this to-day—and even if I can't, it can go by the early post to-morrow. I had a brilliant inspiration in dreams last night—on the subject of Biblical Criticism, viz.—it is said that 2 Thessalonians is a forgery because it's a sort of crescendo of 1 Thess.

Principle—a book which is written apparently in imitation of another book, is the work of an imitator, *i.e.* a forger.

Now my dream was that I was saying Xmas Eve to you (which I don't know) and that it kept running off into Easter Day. Then it occurred to me that there is a great similarity between the two

poems, so great that German critics, if they were examining authorship, would certainly prove that one was founded upon the other, and therefore was a forgery—I determined to apply this to 1 and 2 Thess.—and so woke. The subject is beginning to permeate my dreams now, for I woke another morning remembering that S. Paul had claimed the gift of tongues for himself, and thinking it differed immensely from the German critics' view of him. Certainly if he could (and did) speak with tongues, this differed more in style from the close argument of Romans, for instance, than Ephesians or even Tim. and Titus do. I haven't done any more because I had to write 14 letters yesterday. Then an old pupil of mine—a schoolmistress now—came to tea and stayed nearly till 7. Why did you repel with scorn and contempt my proposal to read the other Epistles? It *is* very interesting to read them straight through, one gets a much better idea of drift—and I must do it sometime—but I'll do it by myself if you dislike the idea so much. [J]

Dearest I want to know what you think about the subject. Ideally, mustn't one want to care as much as possible for as many people as possible? Of course I know there are practical limits. Time and thought are limited—but shouldn't one try to make these as little of a hindrance as one can. I want to know what you think more—but I won't continue this by letter, if you are likely to worry yourself about it. We will leave it till we meet again, if so. But I think it is partly connected with your attitude to people at large, and that perhaps I don't quite understand. How are you, dearest? Do you know how much I have been talking to

you since we parted? I am afraid I'm not very lively for A——, and it's so silly to be irritated by little things in her. It is a sort of moral starch that she wants—not exactly Margaret's bracing system, but something analogous though less drastic. I must stop.

Goodbye dearest.

Yours,

M. B.

(*To Miss Gourlay.*)

Addington Park.
October 6 (1896).

DEAREST,

This is rather hard luck isn't it? It's raining steadily, with a perfectly grey sky. The girls have had 2½ hours' drive in pouring rain, and will have the same back again. We have just finished lunch—it is one o'clock—and we *can't* have tea before 4.30. I hoped they might have a proper British contempt for rain, but they haven't at all, and decline to go out. Lucy has sent me off to rest for an hour, for which I am deeply thankful, as after that we shall have 2½ solid hours of dumb crambo or musical chairs.

I began to write on S. Paul's Epistles yesterday, and was seized with a fever for writing, but there's not much opportunity for indulging it to-day. I may count writing to you resting, but I can't count writing on German criticism. Dearest, if letters aren't everything they are very much. I always wake in the morning with the expectation of your letter. I read a little of Caird's *Evolution of Religion* with Constance. He seems to me to mistake the

whole point of S. Paul's teaching. I think Caird has gone mad on self-realisation through self-abnegation, for he makes it the sole point of Hegel too. Of course it's true in a way of both of them, but that point of view is a Greenian, an Oxford point of view. Goodbye. My dearest.

Yours,

M. B.

I'm *quite* well.

(*To Miss Gourlay.*)

Wolverhampton.
October 8 (1896).

DEAREST,

It was good to see you even for that short time—though I was choked with things to say. The worst of it is that under those circumstances one always talks business, as it is the easiest thing to get out.

My bag seems to be chiefly packed with your books and letters. I have been reading the *Natural History of the Christian Religion*, and I have got the sonnets too. I realised yesterday that besides the principle of "persistence of theme" I have to do "unity of thought and doctrine"—which is a vast subject. It's odd that the people who most believe in the development of Christ's own consciousness, allow least possibility for the development of S. Paul's doctrine. What I meant about self-abnegation was not that it wasn't true, but that it wasn't S. Paul—his point is rather renunciation of *self-dependence*, than self-abnegation, and he never rests on *self*-realisation, he is much more objective than that—it would be rather the realisation of Christ's

life, " I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." I don't mean that that isn't self-realisation in a sense, but that it isn't self at all that is dwelt on—and that Caird, having seized this point, tries to force S. Paul and Hegel and every one else into his own mould.

No, I *don't* like your attitude about other people—even as you explain it—it is so isolated—I think you are wrong in saying " people don't want to be bothered with one "—I don't think most people are isolated—and if they are they oughtn't to be. However, it is a largish subject. Goodbye dearest.

Yours,

M. B.

CHAPTER IX

WINCHESTER

My father went off in September, 1896, with my mother, for a tour in Ireland. He was in good spirits, his speeches, of which he had to make many, were in his best vein, and his talk at the various houses where he was entertained was unusually vivid and lively. But the strain of work had been great, and the heart, whose condition had long caused anxiety, suddenly failed. He died on October 11, in Church at Hawarden, where he had gone to stay with Mr. Gladstone on his return journey.

We all joined my mother there, and the funeral followed at Canterbury. We returned to Addington, and then went to Lambeth to put things in order.

It is somewhat difficult to define the relation between my father and Maggie. He loved her very tenderly, and fully recognised the force and beauty of her mind and character. He encouraged her in all her plans and designs, and entered with enthusiasm into her work, her excavations and her sketching. She regarded my father with great devotion and reverence, but never quite overcame her awe of him. Maggie was extraordinarily sensitive to the smallest shades of manner, and the presence of

anything like displeasure or depression agitated and affected her deeply. Her long absences from home and her frequent ill-health prevented her from being my father's close companion ; moreover, her natural reserve and her lack of expansive geniality, except with companions with whom she felt entirely and wholly at ease, prevented her from talking to him with the kind of gay and merry confidence which Nellie had given him. The result was that though my father loved Maggie's quiet and thoughtful talk, there was never quite a sense of simple camaraderie between them. She was too anxious lest the talk should take any turn which she dreaded, too sensitive to his varying moods, too eager to be exactly what she thought he would like her to be, and thus did not respond either as spontaneously as she could have wished to do to his swift and eager visions, or as tranquilly as it was advisable to do to his over-emphatic concern. In several ways she resembled him closely. She had his practical grasp of organisation, and something of his sternness of view about life and its issues. But she was slow to express herself, humorous rather than lively, while she was fully as sensitive as himself to the demeanour and manner of others. Like him, she emphasised and exaggerated the significance of small things ; and thus both by her very likeness to him, and also by the great delicacy of her nervous organisation, which gave her an immediate and distressing sense of discomfort in the presence of anything agitating or painful, it was inevitable that their companionship should be fruitful in obstacles to complete understanding. She was so deeply dutiful that she was inclined to read into his mind her own sense of her

inadequacy to play her household part; and thus though they each had a sincere respect and true affection for the other, neither could attain to the serene confidence which both equally desired.

It was soon after his death that she wrote thus to Miss Gourlay—

Addington Park,
Croydon.
Nov. 8 (1896).

. . . . .

My mother has been reading us some poems of my father's. Sometime I should like you to see them—one of them written to her when she was only 11, another just before they were married, about the seven years he had loved her—and she was only just 18 when they married. It's strange, dearest, the way in which death can really open to one new knowledge of people—one couldn't have realised that side of him before, and one can begin to now—I mean it is just one of the ways in which one can see the truth of "it is expedient for you that I go away." Do you see what I mean, that the actual present relation to him as one's father would necessarily overpower all else that one had not actually known?

Just so the knowing Christ after the flesh, must while it lasted have in a sense made the eternal relation to him more difficult to grasp. I am not sure that this wouldn't partly explain the fact that that eternal relation comes out so much more clearly in the latest-written Gospels—that a different proportion has come out in words and acts.

. . . . .

The sudden suspension and winding up of two big establishments like Lambeth and Addington is in itself at any time a most intricate and laborious process. But Maggie had to go abroad for the winter, while Hugh's health broke down, and my mother was advised to go out to Egypt with them. I was at Eton and had to go back to my boarding-house. It was all done somehow, but chiefly through the kindness of Archbishop Temple, who assented to everything suggested, and conducted large business transactions in the most generous spirit and in the briefest of notes. The expedition to Egypt was very disastrous. Maggie had an attack of pleurisy followed by a heart-attack, and her recovery was thought impossible, her death being for an hour momentarily expected. She described to me afterwards her sensations—it was as though she were sinking away from and through everything material into some unsubstantial void. She did not wish to die, but had no fear, and lay praying aloud that she might not have to leave her mother just then, and life slowly came back to her. It was soon after that my brother went on ahead to make arrangements for them at Helouan ; when they followed, all they could find was that he had been taken off the boat on an ambulance, and when he was discovered, he was in bed at Helouan with typhoid. When he was convalescent, Miss Tait fell a victim to the same complaint, and was dangerously ill. They eventually had to stay on till June, in fierce heat, in a hotel kept open for them at much expense after all visitors had departed.

Eventually they got back to England and went to Farnham Castle, to stay with the Davidsons.

There the beloved Beth rejoined them, but had a long and serious illness. Meanwhile a house had been taken at Winchester, in St. Thomas' Street. It was a stately old Georgian mansion with big quiet rooms, a shady garden with a fine old mulberry tree, the whole backed by the ancient wall of the Close, with the Cathedral looking over; and they had many friends at Winchester. But it was a melancholy time. The busy and active life had vanished into air. For years before that, there had never been any question about what to do; every week and every day had been filled with duties, and there had been a constant stream of visitors, with all the touch of brisk and living affairs. Such quiet hours as could be secured had formed a refreshing background to all the stir and concourse. It is very difficult to reorganise life in a moment on leisurely lines, and with the feeling that nothing you do is of any account. Moreover my father's ardent and emphatic personality had been the centre of the whole life of the household. He was not a man who withdrew himself from family life to his own business, nor had he used domestic intercourse only for refreshment and repose. He carried his visions and schemes and interests and anxieties everywhere with him, and had discussed them freely, claiming sympathy and assistance; so that here again there came silence and inaction.

Maggie felt all this very severely. It was partly the loss of normal activities, but it was also the sense, which was at this time emphasised and developed, that she herself was responsible for the life of the household reviving on a different plan. Her letters to friends indicate a deep dejection of

spirit—"I meditate futile plans of escape," she wrote, "it seems impossible to take up life again."

In reply to a letter urging her to pay a visit, she wrote, "I want to hide my stupid head in my own burrow; I feel a dead weight on everyone's spirits, and more of an anxiety than anything else—indeed, I feel a grief to myself and to everyone connected with me."

But gradually her interests revived, and she became aware that she had demanded too much both of herself and her circle. She wrote to a friend, "I was thinking about you, and your photograph talked so loud that it disturbed me. . . . I have got a little too much into the way of regarding everything as a highly critical opportunity lately."

We did what we could, but we all suffered from the shock and the strain. I began in leisure hours to work through my father's papers and correspondence, and started upon the biography, and here Maggie was of the utmost assistance to me with her strong sense of proportion and her firm grasp of detail. The book began to grow. But her health gave rise to considerable anxiety; she did not revive, and suffered much from exhaustion and listlessness.

(*To Mrs. Shuttleworth.*)

Haslemere.
July 17 (1897).

. . . . . .

Have you by the way ever read Ibsen's Peer Gynt? Among the dramatis personæ he includes "a person in green," Memnon's statue singing, the Sphinx, "a button-moulder," "a lean person"

and *several madmen and keepers*—that last was like us, only there weren't any keepers ; the scenes are laid in Norway, in the Sahara, in a mad-house in Cairo, off the coast of Morocco and other places !

We are beginning to settle at last. Lucy Tait has taken a little tiny house in London near the Abbey, which we are all to use in turn—and I think we may take a very charming house near here. It's compounded of two old houses, a Quaker's Meeting-house, a small farmstead, partly turned into school-house, and a gymnasium. This sounds like Peer Gynt again !

I wish very much I could have come down to Truro, and I should like immensely to have come to you—but it wasn't possible then. I haven't been very well, and have come here for bracing, and as you see we have been rather under the yoke of distraction, etc. But do let me come some other time. I should like it so much. I hope to come down again to Cornwall next winter. Couldn't we meet then if not before ? Your problem *is* a difficult one : it's awfully hard to go on by oneself in any distinct line without some definite point to work to. What kind of thing do you feel most drawn to ? Two things that I have been considering lately—they sound rather discrepant—are village industries, and an analysis of fairy tales more or less on the Andrew Lang lines.

The first would be in the direction of poultry and rabbit feeding, and *rabbit's wool* on the French lines, and the supply of town markets. I heard of some clergyman's daughters who organised it most successfully—early vegetables too in Cornwall—and the other isn't by any means so frivolous as it sounds.

One finds some of the most familiar features of German fairy tales in Early Egyptian stories, for instance—one would have to see what Andrew Lang has done, look up folk-lore books like "The Golden Bough," and get hold of fairy stories, Norse, German, Egyptian, *Japanese*, etc., as well as many Cornish popular stories as one could. It's a very large subject, and really a very serious as well as a very amusing one. The point would be to analyse the main features of stories, *e.g.*, the fate-idea, and trace back probably to early religious theories. Of course there are no end of things you might care to study, but study without some definite object *is* difficult. Do you care about the study of any form of socialism?

. . . . .

(*To her brother Arthur.*)

Kempshott Park,
Basingstoke.
Oct. 24, 1897.

DEAREST ARTHUR,

I am so very sorry you are having such a trying time with work, and worries about the book. It must be most annoying not to be able to get at all your material as you want it. Of course people who aren't used to writing and yet have got something to say, don't realise a bit the difficulties in which it involves you to have to wait. But *can* the book be pushed forward quite so quickly as you suggest? It is much quicker of course than most biographies. I know there are various notes of incidents, etc., which Mama wants to make, and which she has really not had time to get.

When the Bishop has had it, could it not wait for

a bit—as you have got it all into shape—to give time for dilatory notes to come in? You might also then have a better opportunity for finishing—less press of work. I don't mean that it could lie by for any length of time—but for a few weeks perhaps. Would this be possible? You have, as it is, got on so much faster than any of us conceived possible.

I am so very glad you liked Nettie so much. She is one of the most unselfish people I know, and you can imagine what a tremendous boon her friendship has been all through this time—apart even from one's personal feeling for her.

I will really try to send the Wellington College book as soon as I get back.

Your loving sister,

MARGARET BENSON.

(*To Miss Gourlay, illness of a little nephew, Cecil.*)

9, St. Thomas Street,
Winchester.
Dec. 25 (1897).

My dearest, we were very much distressed by your letter of yesterday, but after this morning's I am hoping it is true that Annie's report has been exaggerated. I have prayed and go on praying, my dearest, that whatever may come, he may not suffer, and yet God knows so much better than we how little and tender he is, and also what he can and should bear. And, dearest, even if in spite of our prayers, suffering of some degree should come, do try to remember how thankful one can be for suffering—though it would be so far worse for you to see it than to suffer it. Yet it may be part of the

birthright even of that little sweet soul. Remember too, dearest, that what is terrible to watch passes sometimes like only a bad dream over the person who is suffering.

But, dearest, I trust and pray that there may not in any case be this to bear. I hope from your letter too that it's not like that, as you say that you think he will be able to some extent to enjoy his presents.

The service in cathedral was very nice this morning, and this afternoon Mother, Lucy, Canon Mason and I, walked to the Cloisters, which were looking so beautiful and so peaceful. You remember I couldn't translate that verse*—but it was translated to me, and it is this—

"Oh Love, oh Shepherd, who didst dip in life-giving death the lamb that Thou hast gathered to Thyself and dost cherish it in Thy bosom, lead us, who through Thee remember so many happy years, to where it is given to enjoy a love no longer blind." That is as nearly as I can remember it. My father wrote it.

Good-bye, my darling—you'll feel me near you.

(*To Miss Gourlay.*)

9, St. Thomas Street,
Winchester.
Dec. 31st, 1897.

My darling, what a relief to have been up, and to know all about it, and what a wonderful recuperative power he seems to have. Oh, dearest, I *am* glad it is so much better. Dearest, do let yourself be glad in it now, without trying to bear all the

* The epitaph near my brother Martin's grave, in the College cloisters.

burden of the future years. If "take no thought for the morrow" means anything, it means this: now that there is nothing that you can *do*.

And dearest, for of course you must think about it,—do remember how much of delight and interest can come out of a partly invalid life, and what a great character may grow out of limitations. I don't mean for an instant to say that it's not a limitation; and that it isn't a great trouble, but take heart about it, dearest. If he lives, as please God he will, there will be so much for you to do in leading his interests in ways which will be good for him all round, and where his capacities and energies can have play. Of course a boy's *impulses* are in the line of great activities, but a delicate child doesn't feel this so much, and the dreariness that one seemed so often to see in the case of young men who were ill in Egypt seemed to come so much from the fact that they had few interests apart from this, and had been brought up from the beginning in different ways. But with Cecil it is so different; in spite of resolute resistance to learning, he has plenty of brains and much imagination, and one would think decided musical tendencies—and with that, with delight in natural history such as all children have, which would take him into the air in possible ways, there is so infinitely much to care for. Think of a life like Stevenson's, dearest; with all trials and depressions, it was so much more of a life—apart from writing I mean,—so much more vividly lived than most strong men's. Oh, dearest, there is a great deal for you to do,—very difficult, but such hope in doing it,—and meanwhile, darling, take all the comfort of his being better. I know

the anxiety and uncertainty are hard to bear,—but you have only got to-day's anxiety to bear to-day—not to-morrow's.

. . . . .

(*To S. A. McDowall.*)

Falmouth.
March 7, 1898.

. . . . .

I have come to the conclusion that one of the few (*very* few remember) things that men can do better than women is to clean coins. In our hands they turn all sorts of strange colours, and if we leave them in the box for a week they accumulate masses of fresh rust.

Is it possible that you could clean them for me, and take them to the British Museum ?

. . . . .

I have divided the coins into two parts—those which appear to be absolutely destitute of any marks of identification whatever, and those which are not.

The first class—if they are what they seem,—it would seem unnecessary to present for the inspection of a specialist ! So I have put them in a separate box, but if any of them *are* any good, perhaps you would put them with the others.

Then about the others. I don't wish to appear idiotic, and, so to speak, to ask Mr. Head's opinion on the value of a copper halfpenny—but if there is *any doubt at all,* we should wish to ask. What do you think—could you exercise a certain amount of discretion on this, in a preliminary investigation ?

. . . . .

(*To S. A. McDowall.*)

Pendennis Hotel,
Falmouth.
Jan. 21, 1899.

. . . . . .

I have brought Phantastes here to re-read. It is really charming, isn't it? I wish you would sometime write me more of your views on it. The lady of the marble, and the alder maiden bear a kind of correspondence to Una and Duessa, don't they? Then he comes to disillusionment, cynicism —the shadow—by persisting in looking into the dark side of life,—which seems to be concerned with only the common things of life,—looking like a cupboard, and having ordinary utensils in it, but opening out, though dark and narrow, right through the length of the world up to the sky.

But the other man, the knight, who has come to the same crash in life—has mistaken the apparent beauty of what is evil, for the beauty of holiness, avoids cynicism and therefore disillusionment by giving himself up to great deeds. Does this go along with your theories?

. . . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

Pendennis.
22 Feb., 1899.

My Dearest Mother,

I want you to see Arthur's enclosed letters. I have answered.

(1) Apologising, (2) Offering to cut down—but (3) Urging very strongly that he should make it

longer. I have told him I believe in it tremendously. I have quoted what Adeline said.

But as you see it's an awfully critical moment. I believe it can be made a most interesting and beautiful book (Nettie says suddenly in a loud angry voice—she knows I am writing—" Say ' Who's Macmillan ? how can he judge ? ' ") but you see re-arrangement isn't possible, if you are packed into a box where you can't move. Without some elasticity there's no possibility of re-arrangement. Besides, things must be added to if they are incomplete. So that if he doesn't give more space, there really isn't much I *can* do. Moulding isn't possible if you can only pinch in and not fill out. Now is there anything any one can do ? I'm horribly sorry so to worry him, and he isn't cross, only desperate—I'm dreadfully touched. But if without urging anything, anyone could give any encouragement as to the way it is going which would make it feel worth while to him to squeeze Macmillan instead of the book, it might be a help.

(*To her Mother.*)

Polurrian,
March 11, 1899.

Oh such a gorgeous day of storm and afterstorm here. The sea brilliant, the distant cliffs transparent—the sea breaking on rocks under the surface, and splashing up the cliffs—sea-gulls dotted all over and sitting out all the waves they could, and getting up when they absolutely had to, like a cloud of pigeons, and resettling. After watching them some time we came to the conclusion that they were really partly playing ! Some wallflowers among

them stood in rows watching from above. Then inland, gorse glittering, pools of rain-water, raw umber in colour, and gulls and crows following the plough—just *close* behind it. Oh!

. . . . .

There were two child-cousins to whom she was greatly devoted, Kitty and Stewart McDowall, the children of my aunt Ada Benson, who died in their infancy. They were much with us at Addington, at first in the care of my sister Nellie. After her death, my uncle, Mr. McDowall, entrusted Maggie with an informal sort of guardianship. She made a close friendship with them and won their entire confidence, talking to them, amusing them, advising them, and constantly writing to them. This friendship continued all through Stewart McDowall's school and undergraduate days, and was a tender and unbroken regard. When he became interested in philosophical matters and eventually determined to be ordained, she went into all his difficulties and perplexities and dissipated them by her clear and luminous explanations, endlessly careful and patient. When he married she took his wife into her affection.

Mr. Stewart McDowall writes—

"In spite of Maggie's extraordinarily vivid personality, it is hard to remember the exact details of what she said. I think this is due to her appreciativeness and her power of seeing things from your own point of view, so that you remember her influence on *you* rather than her own words.

Her range of interests was very wide: I personally have letters from her on excavation,

photography, carpentering, cleaning coins, philosophy, science, theology, animals, family affairs, old country houses, a queer snake, Milton, stocking fish-ponds, breeding varieties of the currant moth, descriptions of scenery, character-sketches of common acquaintances, the meaning of George Macdonald's allegories, and book-illustration.

Her eagerness in discussion was very great. Arguments were continued eagerly on the stairs or anywhere—with hearty laughter often, and great appreciation of the humorous side. Discussions were picked up days or weeks after, exactly where they were left.

She was always willing to hear and weigh everything you had to say, however crude. She loved discussing over the 'chain-room' fire at Tremans by the light of the smouldering logs. I remember one occasion when the fire was smoking so that tears ran down our cheeks, yet this made no difference, and it was one of the most suggestive discussions we had. She spoke slowly with long pauses, when anything serious was on the tapis—and was always ready to see and admit your difficulties. 'I know . . . I *know*,' and then followed a clear and sympathetic presentment of the case as a whole.

She could be very direct and caustic—never sentimental, always tonic. I remember as a remarkably sentimental boy talking about 'Six Common Things,' and saying that I didn't care for 'Poor Miss Huntingford' and 'The Defeat of Lady Grantham' as I cared for the other stories. I wanted to expand my thesis and wallow in sentimentality. All she said was 'No, I don't suppose you would.' I shut up, and felt she was brutal and unperceptive. But

it was true—that was the worst of it—and just what I needed, as I realised later; though it stung for years.

I remember her clear-sighted, humorous, and epigrammatic summaries of acquaintances. She was a quick, and generally, though not always, a very sure judge of people, and not naturally expansive. Some people were rather afraid of her. I think she was even more appreciative on the intellectual than on the personal side. She didn't suffer fools very gladly always, though personally I never felt a touch of intolerance or impatience. She was always extraordinarily *bracing*, especially in times of illness or anxiety.

On the whole, I should say that her personality rather than her words impressed one. She always said 'the just word' with infinite commonsense. She was often epigrammatic, but one remembered less the brilliance of the phrase than the fact that it pointed the argument or summed the situation exactly. Then again, she was so allusive—she remembered the letter or conversation of perhaps months ago, and went on from the same point without any hesitation—the result being that many of her letters lose all meaning to anyone who doesn't know the whole circumstances; and of conversations one only remembers the general drift, because one conversation might last for months. Her memory was marvellous, and never seemed to fail her, even in the smallest details."

. . . . .

It was so, too, with Kitty McDowall, now Mrs. Arundell Esdaile. Her devotion to Maggie was very great, and Maggie lavished on her a deep care and tenderness, entering into her problems and

interests and watching like a mother over this motherless child.

Mrs. Esdaile writes—

"My childish knowledge of my cousin Maggie was really based on our annual visits, weeks and months long, to Addington; it was she who gave me my first riding lesson when I was sent on 'Ajacks'* to the Vicarage, as a letter written the same day records; it was she who, with her sister, taught us to make 'burnt sugar' by holding a lump of sugar in a candle-flame until transparent amber drops fell on to the plate below; to draw from memory the Home Farm with Watch, the collie, in the foreground, lying beside an unperspectived kennel, to make loaves and tarts out of breadcrumbs, well thumbed and coloured to taste, to melt the broken stands of soldiers on a shovel in the fire—a practice forbidden, unless somebody at least as old as Hugh were present—to toboggan and skate, and above all, to act. The making of the accessories in pasteboard and silver-paper, the garments evolved out of burnous and scarf, the fun of rehearsals, the supreme night when one sat up to supper and was allowed to keep on one's clothes—words cannot describe the rapture of these things, especially after we had exchanged our Surrey home for a dreary house in a London street, with no choice of walks, and no variety of scene.

Our pets—small china animals devoid of ears, paws, tails and even heads—were a never-ending source of interest to Maggie, not, as we fondly

* The cob, Ajax, which my sister rode.

believed, because she loved them, but because, as she long after told me, they offered a curious contemporary illustration of the Egyptian doctrine of the substituted body. If Fido or Rover perished, as one did by falling overboard in a deep rock-pool and the other by 'dropping down a drain,' as sadly reported by me, his bereft owner, the stone nearest in size and shape to the lost one was promptly adopted, fed, dressed and bathed, until the shop was again accessible from which an actual substitute could be procured.

She wrote to us about the Pets, she kissed their mutilated bodies—the largest was a headless trunk not two inches long—she sent us stamps when we grew to the age of stamp-collecting, she gave me advice as to dressing when I first had my allowance, and laughed her ringing laugh when I expressed my hope that I should be able to dress like her, I being perhaps five foot four at the time and she nearly seven inches taller, with the stately carriage that impressed the imagination even of a stranger. But I am advancing matters.

As the dreariness of London grew upon me, Maggie herself became more important, until at thirteen or fourteen I had come to find in our now rare visits to Addington, which the claims of school had limited to a few days instead of blessed weeks and months, the one person who could supply what my heart ached for, the love and tenderness of a mother.

A letter from her was a treasure too precious to share, to be taken to bed night after night. I sought her direction in reading and religious matters; during her illness in Egypt I prayed to be allowed to

see her again ; I thought of her night and day. She became my religion ; it was for her that I worked and thought, it was for her that I wrote and read poems and prose. And how wholesome her sympathy was, and her laughter ! Much more steadying was her eagerness to see me write, and on two poems written when I was eleven years old and full of a passionate devotion to the Stuarts which was fostered by the Addington pictures, she wrote me several pages of detailed and valuable criticism. So, too, with my first and only novel, *The Hunted Prince,* written at the age of thirteen round the figure of James, Duke of York, and his supposed adventures in Jersey. One of her criticisms remains with me : ' Don't write of Vandyke's *lovely* portraits, Kitty dear ; the person who knows Vandyke knows they are lovely, and the person who does not is no wiser.' Not once but fifty times since have I recalled that warning, and expunged an offending adjective.

When I was nearly seventeen I went to Truro for a fortnight, and she and my Aunt were there. We had not met for nearly two years, not for so long since my tenth year, and no words can express my passionate joy in being with her, or, I fear, the intolerable nuisance I must have been to other people. It was directly after this visit that I compiled a ' Maggie Book,' embodying what I cared to recall of my intercourse with her since I was thirteen, and of course omitting as wholly unimportant anything that was not emotional or highly wrought.

As I grew up she was intensely interested in my prospects of Oxford life and her visit to me at Lady Margaret was a pride and joy. But as my life,

once so empty, except for what centred in her, broadened and widened, the intensity of my adoration for her softened to a gentler and more normal feeling. But she had been throughout my girlhood, the only one to whom I could confide everything in the certainty of love and sympathy, the object of my passionate devotion, the standard by which I tried in vain to live."

(*To Miss K. McDowall.*)

Lambeth Palace.
June 28th, 1896.

. . . . . .

Now as to your Confirmation itself, my dear, and all that it implies, I want to say a word; yet it is all so great that in saying any one thing one thinks of the hundreds one must leave unsaid. I think one of the things said to me that struck me most vividly about my own, was what Canon Mason said. Do you know him? I met him coming back from Church, and all he did was to shake hands with me and say, "I congratulate you." I don't think I had thought of it in that way before. I mean of the enormous privilege it is on the one hand to be allowed publicly to range ourselves, so to speak, on God's side in the world,—to be allowed to declare for Him —and then too, on the other hand, you reach in a sense the distinctive point of Christianity here—that whereas in other religions—I mean in the finest of the old religions and the present religions of the world, you get a standard of duty which men are bound to fulfil, a demand of the God they worship and declare for, on their obedience, you get in Christianity alone, as far as I know, any idea of

power given by God to man by which only he *can* be perfectly obedient,—and most distinctively you get that in Confirmation—all the gifts of wisdom of the Spirit.

(*To Miss K. McDowall.*)

Tremans,
Nov. 23, 1900.

. . . . . .

My Dearest Kitty,

What you ask in your second letter is so delicate and difficult to touch upon ; and in some ways so permanent a difficulty to every one, that I don't want anything I say to put you off—if you know what I mean—if it seems no help, or if you don't *like* it, or if it doesn't seem to hit the point at all, I want you just frankly to write and tell me so.

For in the first place you have grown up thinking Christianity quite natural and easy, and a great sweetener of life in times of trouble and a guide of conscience, which if we don't obey we can repent and be restored—easily. At least that is how most carefully guarded English children are brought up. So that in a sense it is a sweet and wholesome, comforting, sustaining, *background* of life ; this is what you call an old childlike faith. And from the very circumstances and guardedness of bringing up, it does not and cannot seem a struggle, and *death* on one side, nor life and liberty on the other. And yet—if you read the Gospels and Epistles, what is it ?

So we only emerge gradually *into* feeling it is a life and death struggle, and that in comparison everything else is *unreal*. And this you *couldn't*, humanly

speaking, have done, nor for a long time yet can you really feel it probably. Nor should you try to, I think, do anything but commit it to God, to teach you in His own time when and how you are able to bear it.

Now so far you are not in a peculiar position at all, but in a quite normal one. But here is where I think your particular difficulty comes in.

I think most children and girls take naturally and without self-consciousness the position of knowing that they do not know, and that things are much greater than they *can* know. But I think for many reasons, partly your father's loneliness making him want you much as a companion, partly that you don't like reproof except from certain people (you have asked me so real a question, that I want to give you as *real* an answer as I can), that you haven't known where the natural limits of your understanding comes. You see what you call understanding *the theory* of Christianity is very different from understanding Christianity,—as different as knowing about pain is from enduring it, or knowing about painting from being able to paint. And so you have talked about things without really understanding them—and that always has its revenge, and the sooner the better.

I say we all of us have to face the difficulty of the invisible seeming the unreal, instead of, as it is, the most real. And some people try to meet it by clothing it in all sorts of beauties, of music, of ceremonial; reminding themselves by continual symbolic actions of its reality; then you come in and say easily and glibly "this is idolatry." And to other people it seems as if the only way of realising

the Invisible is to strip it of all material presentment ; and as you happen to agree with them more, on the whole you criticize them less. But don't you see, Kitty dear, that the worst of all these attitudes, the most *deadening*, is the negative attitude of criticism? You hadn't yet entered into their struggle, or known what they were contending with ; and instead of spending all your energy to seize " the evidence of things not seen," you are saying—" Such and such people are idolatrous,—material, formal," and suddenly you find that you are under the very shadow of materialism, a real materialism, because it isn't simply an honest attempt to express things invisible, but, as you say yourself, the feeling of the reality of material things.

You will not, I know, feel hurt by my writing this, for one writes in these things so under a sense of sinning the same sins, that it would be impossible for you to feel offence with me.

Now I shouldn't want you to try any other method of realising the invisible than what is natural and customary to you ; but I do say most absolutely, that I think you can't emerge out of this state of mind until you stop criticising and condemning other people—and I believe if you pray for *humility* as well as light and help, and try to keep free in talk and action and spirit from this critical and negative view, that God will bring you out. Do not even criticise those who criticise,—they probably have a far better standing than your own to speak from.

And then I think you have a tendency—a very common one—to mix up feeling and reality. To agitate yourself in feeling over this, which would be always your snare, rather than to insist regularly in

action on the importance of things invisible. You *know* they are everything, though you don't feel it. Do you pray as regularly as you work, and read your Bible regularly, and examine yourself? regularly before you communicate? Are you in fact making your action correspond to what you know, or to what you *feel*? These seem little things—most people want a panacea.

And then again there is this. God does bring people out into light as we say "suddenly"—very often. I mean there does come a time of life in which just as one's mind seems to get into the new life you are experiencing now I think, so God seems to show to the soul a new kind of view of the world and life. And no one can quite know when this awakening may come, nor can any one hurry it; but you can try to "purify yourself even as He is pure," by putting away all that hinders His working, all pride, all resistance to His will, and by throwing yourself on Him both to will and to do with you.

And when that comes all that I have said about Christianity being a struggle will not be less true but will have a quite different aspect, for you will see that if it means suffering it also means *life* in a way quite different from any you have known.

Dear Kitty, if there is anything in this which seems a hindrance or puzzle to you, put it away as either your misunderstanding or mine.

Your loving cousin,

MARGARET BENSON.

And Wednesday is your 21st birthday. All *best* birthday wishes, my dear. I forgot that great fact when I began to write. Yet it comes in singularly

aptly. "When I was a child I thought as a child—but when I became a man——" The world isn't really finite, you see, unless you limit it to what you yourself can see.

. . .

(*To Miss K. McDowall.*)

Tremans.
Dec. 7, 1900.

I went to the Foundling years ago when Momerie was preaching there. It was one of the oddest combinations I ever saw, with 5 public singers in the choir, and the foundling chorus, and Momerie preaching a philosophic sermon, with inappropriate gestures, which had already been published.

CHAPTER X

TREMANS

It was clear, in a short time, that Winchester did not suit my sister. Beautiful as the house and surroundings were, yet the town was damp and low-lying in the winter, and traversed by innumerable streams, while in summer the sun brimmed the great hollow, like a cup, in which the town lay surrounded by high green downs, and the hot air rose quivering from hundreds of tiled roofs.

We changed all our plans, and it was decided that we should find a house in the country, and keep, if possible, a small house in London, to which my sister and Miss Tait had often to go for the sake of various enterprises and businesses. The house in London was soon found and taken by Miss Tait, a little quaint panelled place, 5, Barton Street, in that quarter of small Queen Anne houses lying just within the precinct of Westminster Abbey. Its rooms were tiny but most attractive, and the street was extremely quiet, though central as well.

Meanwhile various houses were looked at, and fruitless journeys undertaken to Basingstoke, Haslemere, and elsewhere. At last Tremans was heard of, quite by chance; and though it was in a part of the country with which we had no connection, it

TREMANS, HORSTED KEYNES.

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proved so attractive and delightful, that it was at once taken, and the move began.

Tremans, Treemans, Treemaynes, Tremaines—it had been known by all of these names at various dates. It lies in upland country, between the great tract of Ashdown Forest, with its heathery slopes and pine-clumps, and the Sussex weald. It is close to the little village of Horsted Keynes, five miles from Hayward's Heath, and about twenty miles north of Brighton. The countryside is all furrowed into big ridges, running down into valleys threaded by quiet streams, a tract of woodland and pasture and little hamlets, curiously remote from the world, though only some thirty miles from London. The railway comes down from East Grinstead among solitary valleys, and divides at Horsted Keynes, one branch going to Hayward's Heath and the other to Lewes, the latter passing through the fields below Tremans and within sight of the house.

The house itself, I have little doubt, is one of the most beautiful of its kind in that part of England. It is ample and irregular, and of many dates, part of it with stone coigns and mullioned windows, the front of later Caroline brick-work, mellow and dignified. Parts of it are weather-tiled, and the big upstanding chimneys are of very various design. It is approached by an avenue of old Scotch firs, and is screened from the road by an immense yew-hedge. It has a rough bowling-green above the house, with a terraced walk running round it, a little garden in front, with an iron gate between two high gate-posts crowned with stone balls ; behind it is a big kitchen-garden coming close up to the house, with fruit-trees and flower-borders, and protected by an ancient

brick wall, with ivy oozing from the crevices and covered with toad-flax ; below the house is an old cherry-orchard, and the farm-buildings come close to the garden, with high timbered tiled barns, a cattle-byre, cart-sheds, and stables ; and a little chain of old fish-ponds, screened by hazels, descends from the house to the pastures. The roof is crowned by a lead-topped cupola, which gives it an air of some distinction. Beyond the avenue are more barns, and an orchard with a fine old brick dovecot in the middle, and more pools. Inside, the house is finely panelled, great oak panels of a classical style in the drawing-room and ante-rooms, and small Jacobean panels elsewhere, with many curious recesses and cupboards. It is a house full of lobbies and useless spaces and little mysteries, strange lofts and obscure passages. In one room at the top of the house is a tiny panelled trap-door, which looks out not to the open air, but on to a deserted space in the roof, which cannot now be approached, while from the trapdoor there descends a kind of well into the basement, through which I imagine sacks were drawn up for storage. The staircase banisters are of solid oak, with vast clumsily-carved posts at the angles. Most of the rooms have big tiled fireplaces, with Tudor mouldings, with iron dogs and back plates of Sussex iron.

It is one of those old houses, half-manor and half-farm, not uncommon in England, and was built by a Wyatt, who was a kinsman of the poet. It had originally an estate of about eight hundred acres about it. But the Wyatts were unfortunate, and the house became a farm, and later became a tenement inhabited by three or four households at

once. Then it was bought by the neighbouring squire of Danehurst, Colonel Davies, and the house was restored most magnificently by his successor, Mr. Hardy, from the designs of Mr. Kempe, the architect and stained-glass manufacturer, who lived a mile or two away in a stately house at Lindfield. It was intended to be a sort of dower-house for Danehurst, and Mr. Hardy's eldest son, Guy Hardy, had settled there on his marriage, but he eventually moved to Danehurst, and Tremans was let for a time to Viscount Wolseley. He shortly moved to Glynde near Lewes, and it was then that we found it and took it.

The move took place in the spring of 1899, and my first sight of it was in July of that year. I was much tied at Eton then, with a big boarding-house, with the result that I did not see Tremans till they were settled in. I found myself at Horsted Keynes on a summer evening with luggage, and fondly imagined that I could find a vehicle, but it is a somewhat deserted station. A gentleman who had alighted from the train with me noticed my embarrassment and offered me a lift ; we drove up and down the leafy lanes, descending to a stream and up again ; and in turning down the avenue, the romantic little mansion, among its orchard-trees and flower-beds, burst upon the view, as one of the most exquisitely beautiful things I had ever seen. I found Maggie alone, and shall never forget the speechless delight in which I was plunged, as she led me all over the wonderful little domain, where the familiar furniture and pictures seemed to be already entirely at home.

The whole place became inexpressibly dear to

Maggie, and the eight years she spent there were I believe the happiest of her life. She took the whole place under her care. She could not walk far in those days, but she delighted in the open air. A shelter was established for her in the orchard, an ingenious little place that could be turned round on its socket away from wind and sun. She built a small brick platform in an angle of the garden wall where she could sit snugly enough on sunny winter days, and she painted on one of the old stones of the wall the verse—

> " True wind of heaven, from South or North,
> For joy or chastening blow.
> The garden-spices shall spring forth
> If thou wilt bid them flow."

The letters are almost obliterated now by sun and rain ; but it was a strangely prophetic word. The garden-spices did indeed flow forth for her, yet the chastening North wind came too, and swept her from the quiet haven.

She spent much time upon the garden. She set up on a pilaster a black basalt lion's head, an Egyptian relic. It is weather-worn now and covered with lichens, and enwreathed by creepers ; while a little sun-dial which she established on an oak post now hardly emerges from its thicket of rosemary. She set up a wooden dove-cot in the cherry-orchard, and used to watch the doves fluttering and bowing round its ledges from her shelter, while she loved the sight of the little road on the opposite hill-side, winding up among the copses, because, as she said, it looked as if some one might be arriving that way. She painted a shield for the iron gate, now blurred with rust, and we designed together an oak-pediment

with a painted shield to shelter the front door, now embowered in wistaria, while, in a recess above, the two plaster heads of S. Francis and S. Dominic still greet each other with worn smiles. The live-stock of the place was Maggie's special care; she established poultry and cinnamon turkeys, pigeons, and pea-fowl. The old peacock, a vain bird, used always to hasten to the door when the carriage came round, in order that he might admire himself in the polished panels, and used to run behind it down the drive; while when she set a mirror on the lawn, he spent the whole day peering at himself in it, and now and then gently touching it with his beak. She had the quickest understanding of the natures and qualities of animals that I ever saw. She never spoiled them, but they obeyed and loved her with a quiet loyalty. The Welsh collie, Taffy, learned more extraordinary tricks from her than I have ever known a dog learn, because she did not impose her own mind upon him, but followed the workings of his. She thought indeed that she had overstrained his brain, when he died later of a seizure, by pressing too hard upon the pride and joy with which he acquired and rehearsed his accomplishments.

I have never seen her so serene and happy as she was at Tremans. She used to breakfast early in her own room, and work at letters and papers, coming down in the morning to sit in the garden, where she was always ready to put her work aside for leisurely talk. Her room was a beautiful one on the first floor. One end of it was panelled, with a huge cupboard behind the panelling. There were two quaint recesses in the walls, many of her own pictures, and a little prie-dieu of pine with a red

velvet cover and an Arundel triptych at the head of it. Her books were in a case in the corridor hard by. What she liked best was to wander about the garden, and note everything with a quiet glance. She made friends with the robins in the bowling-green, and I remember her taking me out with a few crumbs in her hand and bidding me to observe their rules of life. At one place she scattered crumbs, and a robin slipped from a bush to eat them. A little further she scattered crumbs again, and the first robin appeared, but was instantly engaged in combat by a new robin from a further bush; a little further on, the new robin took the crumbs undisputedly. She explained that they had regions of their own, carefully delimited; but that on the debateable frontiers a combat generally ensued. Woodpeckers came and excavated holes in the old cherry-trees. A partridge would bring up her brood in the orchard-grass, or a pheasant nest in the bowling-green. Maggie had her big black cat called Ra, who afterwards came to live with me at Eton, for fear of keepers, and died there. Ra used to embarrass Maggie by going off to the woods on a summer evening, stalking and killing a little rabbit, and bringing it to her as a present. She tried the experiment of anointing the tiny corpse with mustard, and giving it back to Ra to eat. But Ra only thought it a very nasty rabbit, went away in dudgeon, and killed another.

Later on she had a beloved collie, called Roddy, the cleverest and gentlest of dogs. He strayed from home a good deal, and used indeed to domesticate himself at neighbouring farms, being always a welcome visitor, until Maggie attached to his collar

a little canvas envelope, addressed with charming vagueness, "*To the people at the house where he goes,*" and containing a request that he might at once be sent back, which proved successful. But Roddy was a determined poacher, and went gaily off one summer morning never to return, to our lasting grief.

In a little room in the roof was contrived a tiny oratory with an altar, pictures and stained-glass. This was licensed for celebrations, for Maggie was often unable to get as far as the Church ; while later on it was also licensed by the Pope for Mass, and Hugh celebrated there. Almost everything in the house was arranged and adorned by her. She had a quick eye and a deft hand, loved order and beauty, and the whole place bears her impress.

Maggie loved old memories. In her room at Tremans she had a little glass cabinet in which she had gathered together a collection of little "gods," chiefly Egyptian ; a friend remembers how one day when they were standing together near by she pointed to it and said, "at sundry times and in divers manners."

It is at Tremans that I remember Maggie best, and it is there in memory that I shall always see her.

As she grew older she became very stately and comely in face and movement. She took thought about her dress, though she was economical in temperament and hated waste. She used to come down from her room laden with papers and books, make her sweet and quiet greeting, ask if there was anything that she could do. I remember very well one tiny incident. There was a complicated bit of

family business which she had undertaken. It was my last day at home, and she called to me softly from the little panelled ante-room where she worked. I went in, and found her with a pile of papers before her. "Have you a few minutes?" she said. "I have been into all this and can explain it." Instead of being grateful and considerate, I made some lazy excuse. She gave a little glance at her papers, looked up, nodded and smiled, and said "Very well, then—any time to-day; whenever it suits you." She put the pile aside and took up some other work. It would have been easy for her to say that she had unravelled the tiresome affair, and that at least I might allow her to get it off her mind. But she did not say a word of impatience or disappointment; and when later in the day we went through it all, she was eager and almost apologetic for taking up my time, when she had really saved me an infinity of trouble.

One who knew her well in these last years tells me that she was always struck by her great personal distinction, and the beauty of her expression. Though her illness had altered her appearance somewhat, experience had given purpose and depth to her look, and had not changed the calm lines of her brow, or the expressiveness of her small and finely-moulded lips, or the dignified poise of her head, or her graceful and stately movements.

She always contrived, this friend says, in any conversation, to give an added charm of lucidity and dignity to one's own clumsily expressed thoughts; and she tells me how Maggie wrote her a letter which impressed her deeply. They had been discussing the difficulty of making choices and taking decisions.

Photo by Fredk. Argall, Truro.]

MRS. BENSON AND MAGGIE.
1898.

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Maggie in her letter described a dream she had recently had, in which she was trying to climb to the top of a great ruinous castle, with the floors gone and the stairways broken down. It was dark in there among the precipitous walls ; but whenever she hesitated, a strange light shone out on some higher gallery or platform, which was a sign, she knew in her dream, that she could reach it by a determined effort. This, Maggie said, she had found to be true of life, and that though there were heights which were unattainable, there was always a light breaking softly out upon any attainable point, which beckoned one on, gradually and securely, the " Kindly Light " of Newman's great hymn.

A friend writes—

" She always had something of the child in her, and this made her love children and made them love her. I can never forget the moment when I put my first child in her arms, nor the loving laughter with which she greeted my apologies because he wasn't a daughter, because he wasn't " Margaret," as we had planned he should be. He was her godson, and to him she soon became indeed a fairy godmother, living in a fairy palace to which he felt he had the magic key. Nor was there anything strange in this—for surely, if anywhere in the world a spell of romance hangs over Tremans. All the surroundings suggest it : the gay flower-beds against the sombre yew hedge, the sundial marking none but sunny hours, the red garden paths, the platform of brick-work where Maggie used to sit with her books in the sunshine, with the sweet-smelling herbs brushing against her dress and chair—the path between two

hedges called "the priests' walk" at the end of which there is a crucifix bearing the legend :—

> "Christ in His heavenly garden walks all day,
> And calls to souls upon the world's high way."

And then the house itself—beautiful in colour and in outline, and the animals that sprang to life as one approached ; the peacock who raced along beside the carriage to catch a glimpse of himself in the shining panels, the little bantams cluttering round one's feet at the front door in the hope of a handful of grain from the bowl just inside the porch, the collie that came to lick one's hand in greeting—all these made a vision which a child could never forget. And best of all—the sight of Godmother herself ready to begin at once to exercise her magic powers—able for instance to show one how to dig where real pennies were to be found and to fish in a pond full of floating toys, or to climb trees wherein strange birds had built their nests and laid eggs of wondrous hue. And perhaps afterwards a visit to that realest fairy of all—old Beth the fairy nurse with her snow-white hair and twinkling black eyes which saw everything, old Beth who lived in a room upstairs, hung round with pictures of little boys like oneself but now grown into men and called Mr. Arthur and Mr. Fred and Mr. Hugh—and who was of fabulous age of course since she could not only remember Mother and Godmother as children, but "Granny-godmother" too—or said she did. And then the joy later on of being able to bring a little brother to see all these wonders, another little godson for Godmother and called after her own brother Hugh. It was a paradise for a child. Maggie knew exactly

how to treat children and how to talk to them. She devised the most delicious surprises and treats for them, and loved to make plans for them as she had done in old days for herself and me. She often wished her brothers would marry that she might have children about her. "Sometimes say '*our* babies,' when you write of them," she said to me. "Oh, why should some families be so rich, and others have nary a child to their name?"

Her letters to children are surely amongst the sweetest she ever wrote; take this one to my little boy on his first birthday:

My dearest little Godson,

Though you won't get this to-day and won't understand it when you do get it I must write it to congratulate your father and mother and myself (I don't count the other godparents) on the fact of you.

Your mother appears to think little of your looks and of your intellect, still I have reason to think that in her own way she appreciates you.

I have racked my brains for an appropriate birthday present appropriate to both of us—but I don't think that a kind of nondescript furry animal which is probably the only thing you could appreciate would express my feelings at all.

So the only thing I can do is to give a birthday present to your parents—and I'm sending the book to your father as your mother seemed to prefer it. *You* only care for account books I know.

I suppose you are having a tea-party and if you are at all as engaging as a host as you are in every

other capacity it must be a very nice one. I wish I were there.

Your loving godmother,
MARGARET BENSON.

Miss Gladys Bevan, who became one of her closest friends in these later years, writes—

"One of the difficulties in giving a presentation of her personality is that it comprised qualities not usually found in combination. Thus she possessed extraordinary powers of subtle and complex thought, and she was conscious that such thought is not easily expressed in clear and simple language.

At the same time she had the faculty of wonderfully keen and rapid insight. This enabled her to penetrate with great directness to the very heart of any matter under discussion, and amid all minor considerations by which it might be overlaid, at once to seize the really vital point. Her power of keen intuition together with the depth and wide range of her thought formed a faculty of clear and sound judgment which gave great weight to any view she expressed and which enabled her wisely to plan and carry out her various enterprises.

Bishop Collins, of Gibraltar, wrote with reference to her opinion on some matter connected with the Archbishop's Diploma in Theology: 'She is one of the very wisest people I know.' These words meant much coming from such a quarter.

Again, her fine literary and artistic sense inevitably made her fastidious in matters of taste. But quite simple and ordinary things afforded her the most genuine pleasure. I always remember the

delight with which she would receive some little present, it might be of very small value. This simplicity in her tastes and pleasures was peculiarly attractive. Any sort of ostentation and worldliness was not only absent but was wholly alien to her nature. She lived habitually in a region of pure and lofty ideals, in the company of that which is greatest and noblest and most gracious in human life and thought. Poetry was always one of her chief pleasures. I asked her once what had been the happiest time of her life. She thought, and then said : ' When we were at Kenwyn—I used to sit in a field with my mother, while she read Tennyson aloud to me.'

The largest and finest natures are distinguished by the keenness with which they realise their relationship to other people. To be in touch with those around her was a necessity of her being. Merely superficial intercourse she found unsatisfying. This necessity was felt in varying degrees. She faithfully kept up associations formed in childhood, at school and at College ; but that which more than anything else drew her to other people was some need of theirs. For the weak, the sorrowful, the lonely, she felt a peculiar tenderness. She would spare herself no trouble in seeking to help those who had difficulties, whether in their circumstances or in their own dispositions. With unwearying patience she would listen to all they had to tell her, and it might be, bear with their waywardness, her insight and clear judgment enabling her to understand just what help was needed, whether encouragement or rebuke ; but the rebuke no less than the encouragement proceeded from the tenderness she felt to all

human weakness. One of her books of devotion contained petitions for people in different conditions and circumstances. On the blank page opposite she wrote the initials of those for whom she was accustomed to pray. They included many outside the circle of her family and intimate friends—those with whom she had to do in various capacities, her fellow-workers, those whom she had known in former years, etc. Each one was put down in her book opposite the petition which was specially appropriate and the needs of each remembered in her intercessions.

But this continual expenditure of thought and care proved too heavy a burden for one whose power of sympathy so far outstripped her physical strength. It weighed her down at times with a sense of responsibility in matters which she was powerless to control.

She had times of sadness when her longing to be of greater service to others and especially to her mother made her regret that her health allowed her to do so little of all she desired. Other people worked hard, but much of her time had to be spent in resting ; no great physical exertion was possible for her without severe fatigue. She said that she had so much and gave so little in return. I suggested that the value of work is not measured by length of time, and that she gave in quality what others were able to give in quantity.

But in her unselfish devotion to the needs of others, there was nothing of that which with some people passes as unselfishness, *i.e.* unwillingness to accept as well as to give help. She considered that those who are always *doing* things for others without

desiring any response or affection, lose much which would make their own lives richer and fuller. I suggested that as some people are not able to make a response such an expectation might be making demands which are impossible of fulfilment. She thought it better at any rate to make the attempt, and said that one gained the love of other people rather through receiving kindness at their hands than by showing kindness to them.

She wrote to me once about being worried from being obliged to give up one's work for a time, with the necessity it involves of leaving it to other people who are already hard-worked. She said that it was a pity to allow the feeling that one is useless to weigh on one's mind, and that the feeling was probably in great part the reaction from having too many claims on one's time and thoughts. She did not think that it was good to be in the position *always* of responding to those claims, that one needed time to oneself, when no claims were made, certainly not of business, perhaps not even of affection, and that it was good to use times like this when they came, to 'go into a desert place and rest awhile.' The very restlessness one experienced at such a time was a symptom that one needed it. She advised giving as much time as is possible to reading, and perhaps to meditating too—in *serenity*. It was good, she said, to throw off the feeling that one ought to be *doing* something, and to take the cessation of claims with gratitude and serenity.

I once asked her what fault she most disliked. After thinking for a few moments she said 'Hardness.' She often referred to Browning's

'Paracelsus' as illustrating the mistake of regarding human life too exclusively from an intellectual point of view, to the neglect of human love. She was fond of quoting the remark with which her old nurse would express disapproval of some story which had been read to her: 'I can't think why they were so unloving.' For Maggie too, to be unloving was a defect serious enough to mar any character.'

. . . . . .

The years between 1899 and 1907 were very full of quiet work at home, but there came a further visit to Egypt with my aunt, Mrs. Henry Sidgwick, and Miss Gourlay in 1900. It really seemed, at this time, that though she was still delicate, her health had been established on a secure basis, and the old maladies left behind.

Miss M. Ponsonby who met her at Aix, on her return journey, writes as follows :—

"We went to Aix-les-Bains just after my father* died. I didn't know Maggie very well before then, but her room was next to ours, and we had long talks every day.

"What impressed itself so much on my mind was her power of looking at circumstances as they are, and not as one wants them to be. I mean that one so often soothes one's vanity, by trying to bamboozle one's self. Maggie made me feel that this was such an unworkmanlike way of coping with circumstances and life. In arguing something out, she used to say there was always an 'unrestrained

* Sir Henry Ponsonby, formerly Secretary to Queen Victoria.

fraction ' which couldn't be accounted for. To this day Mama and I use that expression, and call it ' Maggie Benson's unrestrained fraction.'

" The ' unrestrained fraction ' was a certain unknown and unexpected element in oneself. I remember her saying that certain thoughts were like a spiral, there was always the bit that didn't quite join, and that made the start of the next circle. She was very much down on cocksureness, which she said meant ignorance, as no one could foretell exactly how they would behave, or much less think, under certain circumstances, because of the ' unrestrained fraction.'

" One thing Maggie made me beware of, and that was the conventional unconventionality of the unconventional ; then there was her delightful sense of humour, and when I embellished a story to make her laugh, she knew quite well I was romancing, but liked it to go on. Only the other day, when I saw her during her illness, she reminded me of how I kissed Lady J—— with such vehemence in the hotel lift that I tore her veil, so that she had to go on to a tea-party with her nose protruding through the rent.

" I think she gave the people she met more courage because her influence was so unconscious.

" What made her so delightful a companion was that one felt she dug the best out of one and often elicited something which one was not conscious of possessing. It was impossible to be a shade or even a shadow ungenuine with her."

It was in the years that followed that she initiated and organised, with the help of her friend Miss

Gourlay, some of her most practical pieces of work. One of these was the St. Paul Association, for Biblical Study. Meetings were held once a month in London, to which lecturers were invited, and a lending-library of theological books was formed. She also initiated a Vacation Term for Biblical study, held at Oxford or Cambridge or elsewhere with lectures and discussions and quiet reading; and she further arranged with the authorities of King's College, London, a series of theological lectures for women. She also gave much help in arranging details for the Archbishop's diploma in Theology for women, which was organised by her friend Miss Gladys Bevan, at whose house in London she spent much time, and upon whose friendship she greatly depended.

. . . . .

Mrs. Stephenson, who worked with her, sends me a few reminiscences, which are particularly interesting as showing my sister's power of attracting and stimulating helpers.

. . . . .

"I was very much younger than Maggie, and my chief impression of our meetings is one of great excitement—a new sense of possibilities—because she listened to all I had to say, and transformed my half-thoughts into interesting whole ideas, of which she gave me to understand that I and not she was the originator. A sentence in one of Monsignor Benson's letters reminded me of her: '——'s book made me feel *him* very clever—yours made *me* feel very clever.' Maggie made one feel 'very clever.' I do not know whether others would

agree, but my personal experience was that under her inspiration, one undertook work for which one was quite unfitted! I do not think she realised how immature and inadequately equipped one was, because, exhilarated by her sympathy, one's limitations were for the time obscured.

"She *was* the S. Paul Association. All the life went out of it when she could no longer be there. At the end of the set paper, she was almost always the first to speak, and fill the horrid pause with suggestion or criticism. I remember her saying 'I am always left to make a fool of myself, while N. and G. are convincing each other of some important point in whispers at the other end of the room.' Of her own contributions her insistence on the 'dying to live' principle stands out most clearly in my mind. She often quoted 'Except a corn of wheat, etc.' On her suggestion, I organised a meeting of the Association, of which 'Authority' was the subject; Mr. Wilfrid Ward spoke from the Roman point of view and a Unitarian friend of Mrs. Humphry Ward's took the other side. I remember Maggie passing down a little note to me, 'You have brought about the Reunion of Christendom.'

"She was, of course, the greatest fun to be with, though that is so difficult to convey. I think she was the first person who made me understand that brilliant intellectual power and lively humour could be combined with great patience with the dull and stupid. When some wearisome person began to speak at an S.P.A. Meeting, and one longed to rush out of the room, Maggie always seemed to be rather touched!

"She once said that if she married she would

more easily say the words 'For worse—in sickness—for poorer' than their opposites."

. . . . .

My mother writes—

"Maggie was very good at using help. When she was writing the Venture of Faith, she could keep several people employed—it was like the Japanese plate trick—as many as seven volunteers could be kept going, and each revived with a smart touch when flagging."

Miss Arnold-Forster writes—

S. Hugh's College,
Oxford.

"It was at a summer meeting of women for Biblical study—at Cambridge, eleven years ago—that I first came to know your sister Maggie. It was virtually she who created these meetings, and her impress is so stamped on them that, though for several years before her death she was unable to attend them, everything in them still speaks of her, and witnesses to the foresight and largeness with which her plans were laid, so that they have proved capable of growth and adaptation. The *principles* that she thought out for securing to women-teachers and others a fuller and more scholarly training towards a living understanding of the Bible, are still the foundation of all that is done at these summer meetings; while it is in complete harmony with her free ungrudging spirit that changes in detail are made from time to time, as occasion demands. It was all a closely-knit scheme, and various developments speedily sprang from it, in which she took an

active part—the most notable of all, the examination for women known as 'The Archbishops' Diploma in Theology,' together with the creation of a body of licensed women-teachers in Theology. But it is not of her work but of herself that I would speak. My knowledge of her, as measured by time or by amount and intimacy of intercourse, was but slight, and yet my recollections of her personality are strangely vivid. Already when I knew her first, her health was beginning to fail, and she had to limit her personal part in the meetings, and to husband her strength, though behind everything her dominating spirit made itself felt.

"I seem to see her now as I saw her and heard her for the first time in a little crowded room at Girton on a dark August evening, intervening in a discussion among the students themselves, on some knotty point in the IXth of Hebrews. She was full of suggestions, eager; keenly anxious to do justice to the views of others and to explain her own, but as she spoke she was struggling for breath, as though, in the old words, the corruptible body was seeking to press down the soul, her brave and ardent soul. That first strong impression of *spirit* in her, triumphing over physical disabilities, was often afterwards renewed, and so too was my accompanying impression of the delight with which she threw herself into the discussion of great questions, and welcomed new light upon them. Hers was a very large and hospitable soul! It stood open to new ideas as it did to new friends, so soon as she had satisfied herself that they were true in aim. It was this which made her friendships so remarkable, and such a distinctive part of her life. She had

many differing points of contact, and in each case she seemed to me to find something special, both to give and to draw forth.

"Her nature was a singularly generous one, and this largeness and generosity shone out in many ways. For herself, she was fearless where the presentment of the old faith in new forms was concerned; or rather she hailed it as a matter of rejoicing, as an enlarging of spiritual boundaries. But she was tender over the shrinkings of more timid minds, and was always anxious to establish an understanding between the forward and the backward elements in the camp. It was characteristic of her that on one occasion, when she found that the words of some lecturer had given pain, she was insistent that the difficulty should be referred direct to himself, pleading that 'he could not' really have meant what was supposed, and that he would be 'so glad' of the opportunity of clearing away possible misconceptions.

"It was to me an interesting study to watch your sister during lectures, and to observe how keenly she was following the lecturer, while at the same time she was obviously working out fresh questions in her own active mind for him to solve later—questions that were propounded orally or in writing. Her hand-writing was not always of the most legible order, and I recall one little scene when the lecturer confessed his inability to decipher the anonymous question, and how she rose in her place and led the laugh against herself with that gay infectious laughter of hers in which none could help joining, and then proceeded to pour forth a torrent of 'hard questions' carefully thought out.

"If your sister could have seen, as we now begin to see, how far-reaching were to be the results of her plans, and how already in numberless direct and indirect ways they are bearing fruit not in England alone, but in India and Africa and in Japan, and among peoples who will never hear her name; if she could have seen in what rich measure her visions were being realised, in a quickened study of the Bible, in the light of modern thought and discovery, and in a freer, yet none the less reverent, teaching of its perpetual lessons—she would have been the foremost to proclaim that this is in large measure due to the band of faithful helpers who co-operated with her from the very first. But her foundations were 'well and truly laid,' and the spirit of expectancy in which she worked, caused later-comers to find themselves drawn into an inspiriting atmosphere of hopefulness. If it be true, as Mr. Illingworth somewhere says, that 'It is the men of hope who carry forward their fellows,' then your sister undoubtedly had this mark of leadership. And yet it was in her no mere blind hopefulness. She impressed me as having a deep interest in character and a clear-sighted facing of difficulties. She *saw* all these things, but yet you felt that what she was *looking at*, in both her friends and her causes, was never the blemishes and the hindrances, but always the underlying good that was capable of rising above them; and this I believe to have been the secret of the inspiration that has given both stability and growth to her work, now that it has to be carried on by others without her visible help."

(*To her Mother.*)

Tremans.
(1900.)

. . . . . .

Two points of a lighter order.

I see they've invented a machine called the Brotherhood Depression Range-finder, so I'm going to invent one called the brother's depression range-finder—Fred would register high, being wonderfully cheerful in spite of weather and war ; he's writing his story—well too.

Also I dreamt that Mr. Arthur Balfour was dead, and Mr. Gerald Balfour asked me to edit a philosophical essay of his. But I went to a séance and met A. B.'s spirit, who was very angry on the subject. Then I was in a quandary, doubting if G. B. believed in mediums, and hesitating therefore to give this as a reason for declining to edit. An unknown lady tried to intercede with the spirit, saying that I was a pupil practically of his own, to which, when it was reported, I replied that though I admired his books much, I had read Kant and Hegel independently, and took my stand on them.

. . . . . .

(*To Miss Gourlay.*)

Tremans.
Jan. (1900).

. . . And oh, dearest, isn't it your birthday and the beginning of all things to-morrow or Thursday ? If I wasn't such a fool in the head I should know what to say, but it's coiled up inside like a watch's mainspring, so you must believe it's there. Oh my dearest, you *are* such a nice person—nicer and nicer.

TREMANS

(To S. A. McDowall, Esq., in a Nursing Home in London.)

Kempshott Park,
Basingstoke.
(1900.)

. . . . . .

I can only hope they will give you nice food! that *can* be a very strong interest at times; I have seen Fred grow pink with excitement after typhoid at the sight of Food for Infants; and Nettie Gourlay said she once travelled back with a man who had just had typhoid, and who talked about Gooseberry Tart from Alexandria to Marseilles.

. . . . . .

Hugh proved a broken reed with regard to roach.* After your scourings of London, quantities of advice from another friend, correspondence with the Wyresdale Fishery, Hugh said that the pond must be deepened first. Then we asked and got permission for that. Then he said he would rather, first of all, make a bathing-place in the Trout Stream. So he and Fred took old boxes, planks, sacks and bricks, and tried to dig it out and dam it up. Next morning the dam broke. After that Mr. Hardy gave him general permission to fish in a rather more real trout stream—which he did for about a week on end, and caught about 5 trout.

Well, I must stop. Take for your Motto "He divided his time into small alternate allotments of eating and sleeping."

. . . . . .

* It was proposed to stock a small pond at Tremans with fish.

(*To Miss Gourlay.*)

Tremans.
(1900.)

. . . . .

The operation (Uncle Henry's *) was carried through quite successfully—but oh it *is* different whether an operation leads to a new lease of life, or to a diminished life. Only if one had more assurance of things unseen, it would probably turn all one's ideas of renewed and diminished life upside down. After all one has no right to talk as if one hadn't that assurance. I expect it hurts one's assurance of feeling to talk as if one hadn't assurance of conviction.

. . . . .

(*To S. A. McDowall.*)

Tremans.
May 12, 1900.

. . . . .

About Holy Orders, I feel so entirely what you say that I did not wish even to ask about it, unless you mentioned it yourself, though I had it in my mind very often in speaking to you. And of course one believes that though the call will be clear enough to act upon, yet that the preparation may come gradually—by one's mind turning, so to speak, to the outskirts of the subject, and to the conditions of the work; and again through the experiences God sends one; and in working among the poor, it seems to me that experience—even such as you have had—of illness, is a great gain. For I think in some ways it is analogous to the experience of

* Henry Sidgwick.

real poverty; it gives in the same way a check to self-dependence, and makes one not only know but feel how helpless one is, and how dependent upon God; a thing which robust health sometimes hides. It is such an immense help if one is trying to help those who suffer to have known some sort of suffering or weakness oneself.

. . . . .

(*To S. A. McDowall.*)

Tremans.
Sept. 30.

. . . . .

I am so *very* sorry to hear about the loss of your friend. It is an extraordinary testimony to be able to say that you never saw him out of temper. It is a thing one has a tendency to think so lightly of—and Christ treated it as so essential. Yet there is an extraordinary peace about such troubles—when one can see the action of the hand of God—so that sometimes in looking back upon times of sorrow, they seem full too of a certain peaceful happiness. I felt it so after Martin's death.

. . . . .

(*To S. A. McDowall.*)

Kempshott Park,
Basingstoke.
Oct. 1, 1900.

. . . . . .

O what a WRETCH I am to have forgotten. I have *no* excuse as Kitty reminded me, and can only say that my *whole* family forgot *my* 21st birthday, though I spent it with Mother at my birthplace—

until I reminded them in the evening—by shedding a tear of discretion I am afraid.

. . . . .

This coming of age is the funeral so to speak of my potential guardianship. Well I liked having that, for it seemed to give a kind of proprietary interest in you.

. . . . .

Dear Stewart—this is a futile letter—but that's only because I am stupid and can't express all I want and *hope* for you.

(*To her Mother.*)

Marseilles.
Dec. 6 (1900).

. . . . .

It isn't very nice in dock because the port-holes have to be shut, and you see vagabonds gazing in from outside. I turned out my light while an Italian Ruffian was looking in, upon which he made faces at me.

. . . . .

I have begun an elaborate letter to Apollos! covering the whole ground of the Christian faith—but in view of the gulf, it's not likely to get on very far at present.

. . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

S.S. *Himalaya,*
Gulf of Lyons.
Dec. 6, 1900.

. . . . .

We have had a lovely time on the whole—only one rough day. Round the corner of Brittany it

pitched and rolled and raced ; that began at 6 on Saturday. It rolled all across the bay on Sunday and settled down on Monday, so that though we had fiddles on the table at first, everyone was about and getting better and better, and all the rest of the time it was like a river. Aunt Nora stayed serenely in her berth all Sunday, eating arrow-root and being quite calm. It was really glorious yesterday, the sunrise over African hills. And the sunset over Africa and Spain ; and finally a full moon, and phosphorescent light running on every ripple.

. . . . . .

I do *nothing* ; I have read 2 stories of Fred's since I came on board ; and 3 Epistles of S. Paul, and meditate on apologetics to Mr. Montefiore, and play occasionally knuckle-bones with Olive, and a Neapolitan game of cards—a *very* good one—with Ashley Eden. I love doing nothing, and feel immensely well, and I have never enjoyed a voyage so much.

I dreamt about you and woke up weeping this morning ; which by all dream-rules should bring good news to-day.

. . . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

Cairo.
Dec. 13 (1900).

. . . . . .

So here we are again—with a real Egyptian morning, and the palms dusty and the kites whistling ; and a negress housemaid, with bracelets and necklaces and enormous ear-rings, beating our Persian carpets with a carved stick, over a balcony as we sat at breakfast.

. . . . . .

(*To her Brother Arthur.*)

Feb. 4, 1901.

. . . . .

How glad you must have been to have had those quaint personal touches with the Queen. One could wish to have been in England now to know all that is passing. Curiously enough,—for it was accidentally settled—we went the evening of the funeral by moonlight up the Valley of the Tombs of the Kings, and into the one untouched Royal Tomb. The painting as fresh as when it was done—and at the end, down galleries and staircases, the coffin, and the case, with the swathed body of the king, and some mimosa flowers, dry and brown, but unbroken, lying on his breast. It was a wonderful and extraordinary sight. Robbers had once broken in, and a royal commission had sent inspectors, B.C. 1100 or so ; but the robbers had been disturbed, before they disturbed him, and the inspectors had left all as it was.

. . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

Gurnah.
Thursday, Feb. (1901).

MY DEAREST MOTHER,

This is Indian ink, as I can find no other, but it seems all right for writing.

Nettie was awfully pleased to get your letter and wanted to write to-day but I have stopped her, as I wish particularly to write myself and I think she may spread out to another day.

Our plans both for Egyptology and for travelling

must seem rather like the "glittering chameleon." Here is a new departure, and the most *definite* thing, in a sense, that has yet turned up. Mr. Newberry has been planning to write a history of Egypt—a big history and a standard one—to be more complete, but especially more literary than Petrie's. It appears that he approves of my literary (!) powers, and he has asked me to help him. He is going to try to get his American millionaire to finance the work,—as the return, if it comes at all, will be slow—and he wants it to be done in 2½ years. On my part, it would involve some work at the British Museum; visits to certain museums, *e.g.*, the Louvre—the suggestion being that my expenses should be partly paid for; and, in general, making it the chief business for the next 2 years—*after I have got* the Addresses done.* I needn't settle till I get to England, but it will *partly* determine our plans, as, if it is on the cards, it is much more worth while to come back through Italy and see the Museums there.

Objections.

(*a*) This is *me*, not Nettie, whereas I always wanted her to do the Egyptology. I can't feel that Egyptology is the thing most worth doing in the world, though I feel that about most other things while I'm doing them. Such a lot of times in my life I've been driven this way and that—things stopped just when I thought I was getting to them, or like Egyptology, opened just when I could do

* *God's Board*, a little book of my father's Addresses at Holy Communion, which Maggie was editing.

nothing else; or perfectly clear and without any question, like Papa's books. But I have felt as if most of these were preparation for something else—joined with a vague feeling and a great desire to be called to something more definitely or more directly in the service of God. Now if I take this it is a free choice, and I shall be 38 when it's finished!

On the other hand it would be real *good* work of its kind. It wouldn't leave another loose end in life, it would be thoroughly compatible with health and what we want home life to be (oh Tremans does always rise up like "a little New Jerusalem"). I do wish I knew what the Bishop of St. Andrews would say—I'm really perplexed, though generally I have been clear—or rather I have generally felt as if there wasn't any particular *choice* open.

Oh, Mama, you are all so very nice at home!

Your lovingest daughter,

M. B.

It would help, as real history *must* help in my philosophy, if I ever write it. Other things are problematical, though I should like to know if Arthur does want help in anything else; and I haven't been "called" in any way I can at present recognise. But if I undertake it, I must stick to it.

(*To her Mother.*)

Gurnah.
Feb. 17 (1901).

. . . . .

We had a long day in the tombs of the Kings on Friday. Did you see them, I forget? I had only been there once, before this year. Now they are

swept out, and look clean and white and wonderful, so that you step out of blazing sunlight and dust into long white corridors with painted walls, going down into darkness, all covered with strange visions of men without heads, or upside down, or bent backwards, wrestling with serpents, and black scarabs rolling red earths or suns, all going down into the underworld, with something less than "sure and certain" hope. I wish one *could* work out this religion question. Baedeker—said to be "very good"—explains "a man bent backwards is spitting out a scarabæus,"—"the king with one arm up is falling back on a mountain,"—"figures of dæmons or genii sometimes enclosed in ovals." It sounds like Lear's Nonsense Book! And somebody further explains by saying it is "only symbolism." We have been up to one tomb this morning where besides the service Nettie and I succeeded in singing five hymns—very loud. Also I read some more St. Augustine, which seems to me one of the most wonderful books in the world. Didn't he write *De Civitate Dei*—is there a translation *cheap?*

There are so very many things I want to talk to you about—(1) Y——. Sometimes I feel absolutely at home and *extremely* fond of her, and feeling that she is as nearly (not complete) but *faultless* as a person can be. And then the whole length and breadth of the world apart. And on the whole I think you get more truth by being too credulous than too sceptical—and for the rest I want to talk about people and things and "shoes and ships and sealing-wax."

. . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

March 10th (1901).

. . . . . .

Here we are really leaving Luxor—and I walking on to the boat as well as anyone else—and it seems like a dream to think of that Sunday 4 years ago—the corresponding Sunday to this—and yet at the same time it is about the realest thing in life. We went over to Luxor last night, so that we were able to go to service in the Church this morning. Oh Mother, what an *awful* time for you all that year was ! Of course one couldn't realise it at the time. But anyhow I don't think, but *know* that you are the most wonderful person in the world,—as you say, " What a Mama I've got."

. . . . .

All I can tell you in a letter seems so sparse—but you know much of the surroundings. Yesterday, coming across the desert to Luxor, I felt like coming back through the looking-glass ; for the other side among the ancient Egyptian and the Arab is *very* different. And sparser still what one *says* about the rest—but this keeps coming back to one—" Oh what great troubles and adversities hast Thou shown me, and yet did'st Thou turn and refresh me."

(*To her Mother.*)

Castellamare.
April 11th, 1901.

. . . . .

Pompeii is curiously fascinating, but it is *not* beautiful. It's just like a small ruined Italian

city now ; and mostly with the worst kind of scene painting in the houses ; but at *nearly* the *very* best it's like *very* well done chocolate boxes ; the very best of course are really beautiful, but they are mostly at Naples. The gardens with their statues are singularly like small villas ; and not so much better. But the really impressive thing is to look up a sunny empty street, and see Vesuvius smiling away at the top, knowing what it means ; with an apparently innocuous cloud like a lamb's tail streaming away from it in the blue.

. . . . . .

We aren't doing much—finishing Egyptian drawings, sketching a little, etc. Oh I *do* want to come home ! I have been away quite, *quite* long enough, and though this place is very beautiful, I'm not a bit under the fascination of Italy. I want to see our own nice little house and green trees, not grey ones.

. . . . . .

(*To her Brother Hugh.*)

May 11th, 1901.

. . . . . .

We went to Milan Cathedral last Sunday not knowing it was Holy Cross Day ; it was a most wonderful sight, and the whole cathedral was full from end to end ; greatly of peasants ; it was a display of a relic with which one's untrained senses would be least in discord, I think ; for in the great Cross they carried there must have been evidently the Wood of the Cross ; yet it *did* seem to one that there the confusion between materialising and objectifying

was made. It does seem to me this must exist too in any view of the Sacraments, which drops the subjective side, because when that is done, " objective manifestation " tends to become equivalent to " manifestation in finite material things, rather than in finite spirits " ; whereas, however much one must believe in the manifestation of God in the material universe, one believes that the nearest manifestation is through spiritual existences—human or otherwise —and it is here one comes back to (isn't it S. Augustine's ?) saying, that there is no definition of the Body of Christ which does not include " ye are the body."

Perhaps these are only my own obvious reflections brought out by a passing view of Romanism in Italy.

. . . . .

CHAPTER XI

LETTERS

It was now that Maggie corresponded very fully and freely with her cousin Stewart McDowall, who was passing through a time of intellectual unrest, and was disposed to scrutinise closely and criticise the religious beliefs in which he had been brought up.

(*To S. A. McDowall.*)

Tremans.
May 26, 1901.

. . . One generally comes to the most interesting part of a conversation just when it's time to stop ; and I've been wanting to go on with ours which was broken off.

First about the orchids—which was very interesting. I don't see that even if one did prove *purpose* in an orchid, it would bear upon the religious question. And I don't see that adaptation, and over-ruling adaptation, would prove purpose. For in the case of animal life, where you *have* consciousness, the physical adaptation (according to scientific men) takes place outside consciousness, by the action of environment, through the survival of the fittest, etc. You can't by *deliberation* make one hair white or black,—but (outside consciousness) the action of

nature does make the arctic animal's hair white, and the tropical man's hair black.

If adaptation takes place apart from consciousness *in* conscious beings, it couldn't prove consciousness in a being where you had no other evidence of it.

But the other point is more important. You said that if a man could lead a *really* good life without being a Christian, it seemed to shew the uselessness —(or some such words) of Christianity. And what I wanted to go on with was that the *fact of Christianity* of Christ's life, is even more important than the knowledge—or rather the recognition of it.

Take even the historical and social side. You say the man is living without Christianity—but is it *really* so ?

How has the life of Christ and the fact of Christianity changed the whole course of history ? By bringing in an utterly different standard of conduct. The man's whole social surroundings, political constitution, early education has been moulded by Christianity, through a long period of history.

He may say he has thrown off Christian beliefs. And he may have thrown off one or two definite beliefs,—but consider all the habits of thought and life which he cannot throw off,—the respect for humanity, the care for the suffering and weak, the conceptions of freedom, of honour, of truth, the ideas of discipline, temperance, charity, all that the Christian world brought in upon the heathen world, and then moulded indistinguishably with what we call civilisation.

Think of the man himself,—his instinctive morality, interests, habits, his very physique, have been moulded by Christian ancestry, that is through

an ancestry of men and women who have been *trying* to live more or less according to the Christian standard.

Even if you judged of the man, after two or three generations, who had thrown off Christian beliefs, still the whole formation of society, formed by Christianity, could not be eliminated. And yet the deteriorating effect can be, I believe, traced in such a country as France.

It is altogether a wrong test to compare the lives of earnest disbelievers, George Eliot, Clough, not to take others, with the lives of the conventional Christian—for they had the enthusiasm or real purpose of a newly thought-out morality,—*ex hypothesi*, they were people who cared deeply, and faced real trouble in giving up belief.

Of course I don't mean to say that the knowledge and belief in Christ does *not* make a great difference, more and more difference as the generations go on. But I mean that the fact that Christ lives, that good is stronger than evil, that He has "overcome," makes even more difference than our recognition of it; and that many men who do not recognise Him, still believe in Him, since they believe in so much —in truth, in love, and in compassion, which is all personified in Him.

. . . . . .

(*To S. A. McDowall.*)

5, Barton Street,
Westminster.
July 22nd, 1901.

. . . Do you mind if one takes this up where it left off?

I don't see how one can make the future of animals a *difficulty*. The difficulty appears to me to be in our own incredulity. Why should we be so set on thinking that they *don't* go on existing? It seems to me it must be some impress of Latin races (who care little about animals) on our Christianity.

Of course there is little about them in the Bible, but so is there very little about children, or any *definite* social question—or marriage. But what does that come to?

"Consider the birds—your heavenly Father feedeth them——" "*Not one* of them is forgotten." (And if you had ever seen living sparrows hung on a string, in a bunch,—*of no account*, that would have a much more forcible meaning.) S. Paul does say, "doth God take care for oxen," but also, in the 8th Chapter of the Romans, he uses far stronger words than most Christians feel themselves able to accept about the redemption of the whole creation. And it does not seem to be an isolated passage, but the outcome of *all* his philosophy.

These are the only places I know where it is definitely touched upon—but what is really meant by the "restoration of all things"—the "new heaven and new earth"? I think many people have in the back of their minds that it would be a little *derogatory* for the Divine to care for animals. It is like Heine's mistake, which, as my father said, is thinking of God not as *infinite*, but only very great.

About the sufferings of animals in this world, I think there are many things to be considered—if one compares them with human beings—but chiefly this: The law of suffering is evidently on one side a

law of purification—of the world. The human being falls under a double law, of physical and mental suffering, but the animal has not only anticipation (probably) in a less degree, but is hardly at all touched by mental strain, anxiety, worry, still less by moral strain, remorse, guilt, repentance, the *strain of moral effort* and responsibility,—and the great strain—for it is really so—of desiring to find in the world the same laws of justice and mercy as are implanted in us, *i.e.*, the strain of *faith*.

I have begun to think that one must regard physical suffering as covering for them, in some sense, the ground of moral effort. And with all this I think one has not half enough rational humility. The more one knows of the world, the more one sees how very little one can ever know in this life of the real being of things. So far as we know every force is indestructible. Is it likely that the force of vitality, and personality, the most ethereal of all, is the most mortal? Altogether, considering the vast ocean of our ignorance, and the strong things that are said about animals, it seems to me that to make the possibility of their non-existence into a difficulty is a most gratuitous *construction* of stumbling blocks.

. . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

Runwell Rectory,
Wickford.
Aug. 30 (1901).

DEAREST MOTHER,

Oh! This is heavenly and *don't* I wish you were here. Here I sit, with such a nice clean

country vicarage behind, and an old church across the garden, and a bridge to meadows in front, with a brown cow who seems to be yearning for sympathy.

A dog-cart and a lovely collie met us, and Hugh looks well, and is out now visiting the parish. He is teaching the waifs and strays to sing (9 of them), and in the school twice a week ; and is to help the waifs-and-strays' school-master with English composition, as he is unable to help him either in Arithmetic or English grammar. I've just had some callers, the married daughter of the Squire, who is living in one of her father's farm-houses. Oh it *is* nice though, and feels at the present moment rather like a chapter out of the middle of a story in an odd number of a Magazine, with no beginning or ending.

But there's nary a novel in the house except *Oliver Twist.* Not one. Can you send us some —fairly standard. Not of the Dracula order—and plenty of reading in them ?

We had the most comfortable little journey—heaps of time in London, and lunched peaceably at 1.30.

Give my love to the Ponsonbys if they haven't gone—and to Bethie. How I *wish* she were here.

Your lovingest daughter,

M. B.

(*To her Brother Arthur.*)

Kempshott Park,
Basingstoke.
Dec., 1901.

. . . . .

You are about the only person I know who makes criticism pleasant. The instinct of the

Benson family in response to extorted criticism, is generally, " Then I shall put the whole thing in the fire "—it creates a nervous atmosphere about the critic.

. . . . . .

(*To S. A. McDowall.*)

Kempshott Park,
Basingstoke.
Dec. 1, 1901.

. . . I don't think I said that *dogma* should be squashed, but *dogmatising*. A religion without dogma would be like statistics without facts, or science without laws—but the *deduction* from primary dogma is unsafe often—only this dogmatising tendency seems to me to be just as much shewn by such theories as you represent Comte's to be. But I oughtn't to discuss him at second hand.

Are you worried by half-arguments that seem to tend against Christianity without being in themselves adequate? I think one must dismiss from one's mind anything one judges *really* insufficient. But I don't agree with you that anything so vital as Christianity ought to be indisputable—

> " You must mix some uncertainty
> With faith, if you would have faith be—— "

If it is to be anything but *mere* intellectual consent, as if to the fact that the world is round, it must be the attitude of throwing oneself on the things that are highest and best in life, and committing oneself to the most loveable and strongest personality in all history—the attitude of saying

" I will take the side of this Man, the most perfect and most heroic who has ever lived ; he *cannot* have been mistaken." That was the problem then—and is the same now—and continually one is brought back to this point. But it's just the harbouring of *half*-doubts which isn't true to either the intellectual or moral attitude. They *are* ghosts !

. . . . .

(*To S. A. McDowall.*)

Tremans.
Dec. 15, 1901.

. . . It seems to me that a lot of questions turn on what you mean by dogma. I think I take it in the natural sense of *doctrine*. In which case it would be plainly absurd to say that it has done more harm than good. It does harm if it's false doctrine, and good if it's true. But if you mean by dogma the dogmatising spirit, or the doctrines of intolerance, or doctrines you disapprove of, the case becomes different. *Dogma* no more burnt Ridley, than did the doctrine that the earth goes round the sun. The moving spirit that burnt him was a spirit of intolerance, acting under the belief that faith was altogether a matter of will, and that disbelief merited and could be affected by punishment,—a spirit which attached itself just as much to the doctrine " There is one God and Mohammed is his prophet " as to any Christian doctrine—therefore it proves nothing at all about the doctrine itself.

I suppose by the Athanasian Creed you really mean the damnatory clauses,—I confess I don't say them, and I wish the whole creed could be relegated to its original position. The philosophic terms are

so difficult now especially, as one understands so little historically of the particular errors they were directed against.

. . . . . .

But if you are going to ask riddles about eggs, I should say

(*a*) that I eat bodies not souls ;

(*b*) that I don't attach any particular meaning to potentiality ;

(*c*) Do you speak of evicting a potential tenant if you take a house which otherwise some indeterminate person might have taken ?

(*d*) If there *is* a potential soul, I am far from certain that corporation (especially as a chicken) is the greatest benefit that could be conferred on it ; and

(*e*) from the point of view of the *Egg* it is quite as nice for it to corporate my soul as a chicken's.

(*f*) I don't know when the potential soul is corporated in an egg, but I should say not before the chicken is—∴ it depends on whether your eggs are fresh eggs, or, as Drummond says " cock and hen " ; and

(*g*) If the excorporation of an actual soul is not on my conscience (*i.e.* when I eat a chicken) a fortiori the excorporation of a possible one won't be, when I eat an egg.

. . . . . .

(*To S. A. McDowall.*)

Tremans.
Jan. 31, 1902.

. . . . . .

But there is something so nice and so genuine about people who are living so close to

realities of life. The more one goes on, the more noe feels how much Nellie did know people ; how directly and simply she took them, and how keen her humour was without interfering with, and of course really helping, her discrimination and real care for them.

. . . . . .

But oh—where has the Benson part of you gone to about my " irony " ? " Contradict while you are thinking what to say "—Do you remember Nellie's maxim ?

. . . . . .

(*To her Brother Arthur.*)

Tremans.
Feb. 1st (1902).

. . . . . .

The " mysterious book " isn't really mysterious, only it needs so much explanation. When I was about 24, I set out in a sanguine kind of way to disprove scientific and historical difficulties in religion. Naturally one's point of view changes ; but the main object was to define the position which a reasonable person, reasonably educated, but not expert, could take up with regard to such difficulties ; knowing that one couldn't without being an expert try to *solve* the question, yet being aware that if Christianity means anything, a historical doubt as to the authenticity of S. Matthew can't shake the whole fabric of faith. Showing, too, how many of the popular difficulties are really on less reasonable grounds than popular acceptance. This in a sober middle-aged way I'm still trying to do.

. . . . . .

(*To her Brother Arthur.*)

Tremans.
May 11th (1902).

. . . . . .

We should have loved to have Mrs. Cox's dog for a visit of any length ; but we are in serious difficulties just now ; for not only do Jack and Toby go out hunting together, whenever they are both free, but (what can't be guarded against), *two black cats* take Jack hunting with them when Toby isn't there. I am afraid any new dog would inevitably be corrupted by all these evil communications, and one or all of them may get shot at any time. We have two Persian kittens too who might be a difficulty. But the first point I fear is prohibitive.

. . . . . .

Hugh writes to me that he has already written ["conveyed" he says] about his position to you ; but I suppose it was not very new to you—his face has been set in that direction so evidently for so long ; and yet one can't imagine really his going further. There is a wonderful pendulum movement in the British nature, even perhaps in Hugh's.

. . . . . .

(*To her Brother Arthur.*)

Tremans.
June 20 (1902).

. . . . . .

Your most delightful letter followed me up to Barton Street and came down with me again here. Otherwise I should have answered it before, —for such a letter gives one a real *glow* of happiness. I do believe that however different one's tastes and

occupations may be, the family bond is far stronger than one is entirely conscious of; but when there isn't that disparity—when you let me into one side at least of your work, and one that is a thorough pleasure to you, and all the old ties ripen into friendship which one can consciously enjoy, it is a great delight, and grows more to me year by year. Will you give me the Schoolmaster?—I almost think I like it better than anything you have written, and it is so much *you* that I should like it for a birthday present better than anything—especially after your letter.

. . . . .

(*To her Brother Arthur.*)

Lambeth Palace.
June 27, 1902.

. . . . .

I remember that time very well, when we agreed in abusing the world and life. I am glad you too feel differently now. Yes, I am sure it makes an immense difference when one realises that being personally unhappy doesn't mean that there's anything necessarily wrong with the universe,—that it was to be expected—and besides, it is much to know that one can be glad of having gone through a time of difficulty or unhappiness. Not that it makes one more impervious to unhappiness,—possibly it makes one shrink from it more in prospect,—but to have known by experience what Brewster calls the "double value" of such times makes a great difference.

That extract from Henry James' letter is intensely sad; it sounds as if he had simply found the power of endurance,—to be able to say, "it's life,

it's fate," and not to be able to say, "it's God," is terrible,—deadly!

. . . . . .

(*To her Brother Arthur.*)

Tremans.
Oct. 7, 1902.

. . . . . .

As for myself, if one has got to have bronchial catarrh and lungs, Tremans is a good place to have them in; I've had plenty of experience as to the nicest rooms to be ill in, and my own is the best: and as soon as one is allowed to go out, as I was to-day, the garden is heavenly; also the 2 puppies and the 7 cinnamon turkeys, and the 5 bantam chickens are charming objects from a window. But still these things don't make one a cheerful member of a family in the remote country. More and more I feel it isn't the *right* place for mother. The country isn't revivifying to her; she doesn't feel invigorated by village life and country people, as Lucy and I do—and when her eyes bother her as they do now, it is almost impossible to forget it. Miss G—— turned up this morning saying that she at any rate *had a voice*, and proposing to read to me, or amuse Mother by conversation! It was awfully nice of her.

. . . . . .

(*To her Brother Arthur.*)

Tremans.
Nov. 11 (1902).

. . . . . .

Hugh has taken a distinctly new start in growing up—although he and J—— B—— (also a

clergyman of the Church of England) bought pea-shooters and peas at a village shop, and shot down corks with them all the evening. They also played with bottles on the lawn all yesterday afternoon.

. . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

Tremans.
(1903.)

Dearest Mother,

I was so sorry to have left under a false claim of depression. It was quite general, and due perhaps to having had 4 mortal illnesses between tea on Sunday and breakfast on Monday, as well as loco-motor ataxy and general paralysis between Friday and Sunday. As all but a threatening of softening of the brain have now departed, perhaps it was less specific illness than the general enemy of the human race. This is only a general apology.

Your lovingest daughter,

M. B.

(*To S. A. McDowall.*)

Tremans.
Jan. 25, 1903.

What it seems to me is being more and more forced upon the "unorthodox" of this generation is this:—that science, even if it comprehends all positive knowledge, is only a department of thought, only one of those things on which a theory of the universe rests.

That a theory of the universe must involve complete experience,—and, in this, religious experience;

in this lies the consideration of (*a*) origin, (*b*) ends, (*c*) ethical consideration, (*d*) essence ; *e.g.*,

(*a*) What the whole universe began from,

(*b*) What it is going to,

(*c*) Whether it ought to be so,

(*d*) What it really *is* in itself.

The *whole* of science is *written* in these four corners,—[even including psychology and religious science, if you grant there is such a thing].

And more and more the fact is borne in on all kinds of people that religious experience past and present, hasn't been sufficiently taken into consideration.

Here seems to me the danger of cramping the scientific spirit, and saying, "you must not take from me this particular fact, or the religious edifice will go." Whereas what is the matter with the scientific spirit generally is that it doesn't see its limits, and complains quite truly, that it is being cramped on its own ground ; unaware that its own ground only covers one department of thought.

Of course this is very obvious with the physical-scientific spirit, which thinks that if it explains the physical side of development, *e.g.*, of religious experience, it has explained that experience in itself.

I have got flue—slight,—and can no more. Write again—please, and tell me what this doesn't meet.

(*To S. A. McDowall.*)

Sidmouth.
Feb. 26 (1903).

. . . . .

I think what I incline to believe is this. That the truest way of viewing "the fire" (if one takes

that as a symbolic expression) is as a *purgative fire*, a fire which consumes all that is corrupt, leaving all that is eternal. That we can never say of any man that there is nothing eternal and divine left in him. But that if a man were to give himself wholly over to evil, he would necessarily, by a divine law of nature, suffer the Second Death of the Revelation, from which there is no resurrection.

That the principle of evil is always being consumed ; and will ultimately cease to be (since it is not divine and eternal) in that day which S. Paul speaks of, 1 Cor. xv. 24–29, when even death itself shall be dead, and God shall be all in all.

Do you know Charles Kingsley's " True Words to Brave Men " ? I think it is there he speaks of " the worm that dieth not, and the fire that is not quenched," and says " Thank God that the fire is *not* quenched," but is eternally there to consume all that is corrupt in man. So that the truest way to view it perhaps is to think that the real meaning of all these symbolic expressions is that God will not leave us alone ; that there is an eternal war between the divine and the evil ; that God will save us, if we will it, by the way of life,—through surrender of our wills to Him ; but if we will not, He still saves us through the way of death and hell, burning and consuming until all that is corrupt has perished ; that if a man wholly gives himself to evil, deliberately gives up all his powers and being to it, that man perishes in the final destruction of evil.

Our Lord does say " *until* he has paid the uttermost farthing." What does " until " mean unless there is still hope ?

With regard to the parable of Dives and Lazarus,

you must remember that this does not (I believe) represent a final state, " Abraham's bosom " meaning " Paradise " *not* " Heaven." I think this is so. If you have not got Kingsley, I will try to find it when I go home,—he says much about this which I think you would care for.

About our Lord's own words, I do not see that there is anything which, being examined, goes against this view. And He often says that He did not intend His words to be plain to the superficial hearer, but intentionally spoke in parables.

. . . . .

(*To S. A. McDowall.*)

Villa Palmieri,
Florence, Italy.
[April 27, 1903.]

. . . . .

1. *Mind and matter.*

I don't say mind must be the presupposition *because* it's the last development; neither do I believe that it *is* the last development.

What I do say is that if you try to speak of matter without presupposition of mind, you'll find you have got hold of an irrational term; *i.e.* that there is no meaning in the thing you are talking about.

(*a*) This is quite evident about secondary qualities: *i.e.* there is no "green," no "odour," no "sound" except to an eye, a nose, and an ear in connection with a sentient brain.

Of course you'll say that is the same vibration which produces colour, etc., through the sense to the brain; but do you really attach any meaning

to space and time which does not involve a mental factor, *i.e.*, a relation between points, and moments ? *e.g. succession* is a relation between moments, but to connect the moment which was and *is not* with this which *is*, means a principle of relation ; does *relation* mean anything to us apart from mental force ?

However little one's theory of the universe should be limited by logic, one must at least be discoursing in terms which mean something.

I can't say mind is *creative* of matter (though I think it probably is), but I do say that it is doubtful whether it is possible even to begin to form a theory of pure materialism, because in so doing you are employing irrational terms.

You see the point about science is that it only treats of matters *within* the sphere of final causation ; when you get to religious and philosophic thought, you are driven to speculate about origins and ends ; scientific people are driven to this very often, and don't realise that they can't apply the methods of science here, because there is no reason to think, or rather scientifically to *know* that they obtain beyond the true region of science.

But when you come to your agnostic declining to have any use for a supreme Being whom he cannot understand ; it seems to me that his refusal to go beyond his intellect is quite different to my refusal to deal with irrational terms.

I can't deal with irrational terms, because I don't know *what* I'm talking about.

But when I speak of an infinite Being whom I believe to be benevolent, and yet whose Creation is in a condition which would seem incompatible with human benevolence, I don't understand the problem,

it is true, but I do know what I'm talking about. I cannot make any scheme of Divine doings which will be an adequate, consistent and logical explanation; but neither could I, if I had never had any knowledge of surgery, make any reconciliation of a surgeon's benevolence and his action if I saw him performing an operation, nor of a scientist's commonsense and his action if I saw him making explosions and "stinks." Indeed it follows that if there is any explanation, one *could* not follow it out; for any explanation that one *could* follow out must be inadequate to the *facts*, of which one could only know a small part. Therefore it seems to me what one needs to keep hold of is this—that there is a double value in all events, and that evil is certainly not *simply* what it appears to be.

This is a common experience about illness and pain, and I believe it is true about sin also,—in philosophical language, the *immediate contradiction* is reconciled in a higher unity. Expressed very simply in religious language, "All things work together for good to those who love God."

As for your agnostic friend, his attitude seems to me to be very crude in certain particulars.

There is a story told of the Queen that a lady was presented to her, and some one said afterwards to the Queen that the lady had been very much impressed by her. Upon which the Queen said "It doesn't matter what she thinks of me: what matters is what I think of her."

Apply this to your agnostic who is arraigning God at his own bar. If there is a God, it matters not the least what your man thinks. What matters is what is thought of him.

Your man has got the universe upside down, as much and more than anybody who thought that the solar system went round the earth, and that the stars were created to give it light when the moon wasn't shining. I mean he can't make *anything* of any theory which *puts himself at the centre of things*.

I really MUST STOP.

. . . . .

(*To her Brother Arthur.*)

S. Leonard's.
(1903.)

. . .

I can't let the day go without an answer to your most delightful letter this morning. It does help me more than I can say to know that you could feel like that—and after all "the less deserved the more divine." For I have been lately particularly suffering under the sense of how little I do, and how much I get; and from the feeling of the scrappiness of even what one can do, and the fact that it is so often one's own fault, one way or another, that has incapacitated one. And curiously, I had been thinking lately of how different all this would seem if I had had anything like your life of full and steady work behind me. So your letter comes with special comfort this morning, and the affection which makes you write it is better than all.

For I have just fallen into the same pit again—partly through the carelessness of a doctor, and partly I suppose through my own; and after a fortnight of staring from bed at a bad oleograph of bare-legged children, and some scripture-pictures

which might make anyone an atheist, I've got to go home in an invalid carriage to-morrow, and to bed again until my lung chooses to get well. However, there's nothing acute or alarming this time, only a rather long business.

. . . . . .

(*To her Brother Arthur.*)

Tremans.
Sept. 8 (1903).

. . . . . .

Hugh went off yesterday looking so absurdly young in layman's clothes, that Lucy got quite concerned for the shock the monks would have on seeing him. He wants things to be only "moderately private" just now. But not actually public property till the step is taken.

. . . . . .

(*To S. A. McDowall.*)

Kempshott Park,
Basingstoke.
Sept. 21, 1903.

. . .

To take the serious part first—I want to really *thank* you for your letter about Hugh. One isn't so accustomed to entirely single-hearted action that one can afford not to be thankful for that, however much in its immediate results one must be sorry for it.

But indeed it was so necessary from the first to put away all extraneous considerations, everything

that wasn't essential, that one is only now beginning to contemplate it in the results.

But he has been so open with us throughout, that there is no such feeling of separation as people sometimes have. Well—I was glad to get your letter, and to know you were one of the people who understand all this, however alien the action is in itself.

I think in some ways the hardest thing for him will be to have to take such a different line from the people he has taught.

. . . . .

(*To her Brother Hugh, then in Rome.*)

Tremans.
Friday. (1903 ?)

My dearest Hugh,

We are all thinking of you so constantly that I must just send this line to tell you so—though perhaps you know it already. I won't even try to express what one must feel in a strange confused and divided way,—but I do thank God for these quiet months in which we have been able to understand so much of what is moving you ; so that one hasn't got only to believe, but can *feel* the unity of aim.

I mean much more than I can say—you know that.

Beth's dearest, dearest love and "I wish I could see him."

Your loving sister,
M. B.

(*To her Brother Arthur.*)

5, Barton Street,
Westminster.
Nov. 22 (1903).

. . . . . .

The S. Paul Association has grown very interesting. Dr. Sanday gave a most *excellent* lecture on the Gospel and 1st Epistle of S. John, from the critical standpoint. Under Gwendolen Talbot, a rather surprising meeting is taking shape, a discussion on "the Claim of Authority over the Individual," which Mr. Wilfrid Ward and a Unitarian Minister are opening. We hope to get some moderate view also represented. As this rather developed of itself, I am glad of it; if we had set out to arrange it from the beginning I should just *hate* it.

You have heard of Taffy's death? It is surprising that one can mind about a dog so much, but the feeling of personality was so strong in him, that we seem in a fair way to canonise him. But will you write him an epitaph—"earnest expectation" is the idea that always occurs to one with him, whether it was for a stick even, or the divine appreciation of human beings.

. . . . . .

About the S. Paul Association and other similar undertakings of my sister's, Miss Jourdain writes:—"Maggie had the unusual gift of leading her friends to know one another well, through herself. These groups were in most cases transformed into a party of friends, not over-mastered or dominated, but able to express themselves easily through her. Just as she had done at Oxford, she brought round her

people of different temperaments and backgrounds, and discovered the central interest that would unite them."

(*To S. A. McDowall.*)

Tremans.
[December 11th, 1903.]

But I don't say all those things nor any of them. I never said religious *phenomena* were out of the range of science ; nor do I think I could have spoken of religious phenomena as being a class by themselves. The point is that what is extra-phenomenal, metaphysical if you like, is out of the range of science, *e.g.* ultimate origin and purpose. It is in this respect the two *planes* are different.

Yes I thought it just worth while to send Chesterton, though one doesn't take him for more than he is—formalistic and paradoxical,—but he is clear-headed, and puts the point I was aiming at.

If the scientist says deliberately, " It's all I have," meaning " I'm not going behind phenomena and physical causation,"—well, if he insists on taking that agnostic position, he must. If he confesses that limitation *after* a study of philosophy and religion, it is probably a real limitation of his own mind. But if it is *before* any such study, it is a limitation of an ignorance with which he hasn't set himself to contend. It can no more be called *honest* doubt, than it would be honest doubt in me to disbelieve in the truth of the Differential Calculus.

But I mustn't go on now. I am shut up with a lungy cold. Now here is an instance under my hand. I don't call such a cold a religious phenomenon ; I quite believe in its being scientifically

accountable for. But if I realised every single step in that physical causation, it wouldn't affect one atom whether I believe it *also* in God's providence to have an end and a purpose, *i.e.*, a religious aspect. The religious explanation and the scientific can't conflict, because they are not on the same plane. There's an example in minutiæ of what I mean.

I don't think any attitude regrettable which means facing a doubt honestly; and the *only* thing I find "regrettable" in your present letter, is a certain difficulty that you seem to show in believing that you *can't* have the question fairly before you. The way of scientists and philosophers is enough to set your teeth on edge. They get things so mixed up.

. . . . .

(*To S. A. McDowall.*)

Tremans.
December 17th, 1903.

. . .

Morals and Metaphysics and Theology being the most difficult subjects in the world, are those in which it's commonly supposed that study and concentrated thought is unnecessary. But as you won't believe me about this matter, let us come to the point.

What kind of scientific evidence in the ordinary sense do you suppose *could* prove extra-phenomenal existence?

What kind of evidence do you imagine does prove the presuppositions of science—*e.g.*, the law of the uniformity of nature which is presupposed in every

case of causation, and therefore without a circular argument cannot conceivably be proved by it ?

Don't you see that you haven't yet grasped the *method* I am trying to point to you, from the very fact that, for the second time, you have tried to destroy an argument not which I *did not* but which I *could not* use—except by a slip ?

I never said it was not more honest to *believe in* the differential calculus without having studied it, than to believe in some theological point.

The reason which you put is quite clear and quite well established—*i.e.*, the reason of universal assent of all who have studied it.

What I said was it was not more honest to *disbelieve* in one than the other without study.

There is every ground for suspension of judgment pending study ; no ground but ignorance for *disbelief* in what has either so great a partial or universal assent.

What seems to you clear, you say, is that we must rely for religious belief solely on intuition.

This is where I find your position wholly indefensible—not intellectually so much, as on the standpoint of intellectual *honesty*.

For you do know this much—that not theologians only, but all metaphysicians, are concerned with the question of what constitutes the *ground work of proof*. Epistemology doesn't enquire only into the methods of scientific argument, which take for granted *e.g.* laws of causation, laws of uniformity of nature, etc., but into the validity of such presuppositions. Well,—by Kant, *e.g.*, the very same questions were applied to basal religious beliefs.

Granted that there is an intellectual cosmos, he

argued, certain laws of thought, categories, etc., are necessarily true as being therein implied. These are the basis of science which science can therefore never prove.

Just so, granted that there is such a thing as morality—a moral cosmos,—what, he asked, are the presuppositions of this? He finds these similarly with basal religious truths.

Of course all this is the a, b, c, of metaphysics, but your scientific arguments no more meet the case here than the ordinary curate's who argues against evolution. You shoot quite wide of the mark. You would find all this and more in a hundred books, put better than this. Where I think the difficulty comes in is this—(I have been considering the whole question in regard to women's education) that religious education (including elements of religious philosophy) is on so much lower a level than education in other subjects. And this is not recognised generally when people begin to be disturbed by doubts.

Any religion touches of course scientific and historical *phenomena*, psychologic *phenomena* and metaphysic truth. From what you say I don't think you can know how study is being conducted *e.g.* in comparative historic study of religion, in scientific psychological study, and in philosophy of religion. Philosophy of religion is of course *the* point, for the question before it is just this—in what region is the evidence; how far *can* scientific historic difficulties, etc., touch the underlying truths; how far will they yield to them as seen in the new aspect; how far could they ever prove what is worth proving?

I write frankly and strongly because I don't think this attitude is worthy of you. Not the attitude of being disturbed by doubt—you can't really find your balance till you are threatened with losing it—but the attitude of not really seeking fresh light from new regions you haven't studied.

I don't write as from the outside. When I was your age I began writing a philosophy of religion which I haven't finished yet, because I found I must know some little science, enough to realise where the difficulties lie, and some historic criticism, and Greek enough for the New Testament, and a great deal more German philosophy. How is it likely that theologians will treat science as seriously as you desire, if scientific students treat theology so superficially?

When my uncle Henry Sidgwick found that his faith was shaken, he at any rate learnt Hebrew, and read the Old Testament twice through, working under Ewald—so my mother said. But I think those earlier men took things more seriously.

Dear Stewart, I do care very much more whether you take a worthy line about this, than whether just now you are disturbed by doubts. I don't want you to hush things up, but to go through with it.

. . . . .

As to what you say about Christianity not being "demonstrable," I should entirely agree with in one sense, but that mere statement seems to me so superficial and *thin*.

(*To her Brother Hugh.*)

Tremans.
Jan. 13 (1904).

. . . . . .

I am immensely interested by what you say of the way in which ~~Romanism~~ Roman Catholicism (how nice of me to correct that) explains other religions. Of course I see that must be in a sense true, because of the very fact that on the other hand the reproach is that it has amalgamated with paganism, and taken up heathen superstition into itself. There is a truth that lies between the two, or is rather indicated by both.

. . . . . .

I must tell you a really good factory-girl story; to be said in monotone, emphasis and stops only as indicated:

"Oh Miss Fithefull we've been talking about why it is we likes you so much. It isn't because you're 'andsome because you're not. And it isn't because you're smart because nobody could say as *you* were *smart*. But some'ow you tikes aour fancy and we don't know why."

. . . . . .

I told Beth I was writing and she uttered mystic sentences such as "I needn't tell you what to say."

. . . . . .

(*To her Brother Hugh.*)

Tremans.
Jan. 21st, 1904.

. . . . . .

A robin has adopted me; will nearly eat out of my hand, and has followed me this afternoon

from the pine-tree walk to the pavement walk. They are great observers of human nature.

The frightful kitten has been named Becky Sharp; as she has sandy hair, green eyes, and an absolutely brazen character.

. . . . . .

(*To her Brother Hugh.*)

Endsleigh,
Penzance.
Feb. 12 (1904).

. . . . . .

I am awfully interested about your plans. I *don't want you* to be an oblate doing literary work. O DON'T take any plan which might tend to this. The reasons are partly special and partly general. Special, that surely you must be a priest. General, that I don't think even as regards literary work that, as a family, there is sufficient *profundity* to enable any one safely to do that only. I don't believe in any case the well is deep enough not to need constant *replenishment;* otherwise it will either run dry, or *thin* symbolism will break down. I think there is less originality in us than power of assimilation of material, and reproduction in a new form.

. . . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

Mullion.
(1904.)

. . . . . .

Hugh's letters are very astonishing, and oh, how extraordinarily unchanged he is by Rome! But I could wish that submission to Holy Church hadn't

begun by " securing our own position before writing for theirs."

. . . . . .

Oh dear, I should like a Retreat. You see at 39, if one isn't *robust*, one does face an epoch of middle-age—and it is single-middle-age, and necessarily not active nor very useful (except in those excessively subtle and refined ways in which adversity is useful—any way, one is cut off from letting off the steam of morbid moods in hard work). Well, I don't want to walk down the vale of life a fussy, egotistic hypochondriac.

. . . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

Mullion.
(1904.)

My Dearest Dearest Mother,

The time has been so good and this morning was so perfect that there is really not a word to add—but that you just make me realise what the life of the spirit is more than any other person.

Such a perfect blue warm day with the smell of summer, and we have been sitting and lying out all morning and I have been doing my speech.

. . . . . .

(*To her Brother Hugh.*)

Polurrian,
Mullion.
('04.)

. . . . . .

We are at an enchanting place, only since we have been here, last Wednesday, there has been

nearly all the time a simply shrieking storm, bursting in at the cracks of closed windows, until we have been forced to make a sort of " tents " with screens inside the room, and sit inside them ; one takes a certain pleasure in it, but no doubt we should enjoy it still more if we could bring ourselves to sit under the table.

Do you realise that, unless you have given orders to someone else, the upholsterer is still in possession of your cane chair, and that presently it will probably lapse to him by English law ?

. . . . . .

(*To her Brother Hugh.*)

Polurrian Hotel,
Mullion.
March 19 ('04).

. . . . . .

We fell in with an old Evangelical couple at Penzance ; an invalided clergyman and his invalided wife, who make it their business to look after people in any sort of trouble who belong to clerical families. They sent us little books of hymns, cream-cheeses, pats of butter, which came from Bath, and small missionary books called " a doctor and his day in Uganda." Do you know the type—extraordinarily real and genuine, and touching ; with a text book bound in red velvet, instead of a birthday book, in which friends were asked to write texts.

. . . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

Tremans.
(1904.)

. . . . . .

I *hope* Lambeth at least might be possible for Beth. It does her such a lot of good to get a little change. Even if it ends in her deciding, as it always does, that she'll never leave home again. Of course one has to balance that unsatisfied craving for more liberty, against the conviction that the limit is in herself. I mean it *may* do her more good to believe she can do more than she is allowed to do, than to find that she can't do much more. I don't know. She likes to have something to talk over.

My *best* love to her and L.

Your lovingest daughter,
M. B.

(*To her Brother Arthur.*)

Tremans.
June 11. (1904 ?)

. . . . . .

Hugh is back again—very serene and cheerful ; of all people I know he is the most permanently youthful—partly quality, partly defect, I think.

. . . . . .

(*To her Brother Arthur.*)

Tremans.
July 11, 1904.

I shall try to get mother to Oxford for as much of the intervening time as possible. The meeting promises to be large, over 150 people in the Colleges

alone, including some Americans and 3 Germans; and as there is a strong church party, and as the lecturers include besides clergy, two Wesleyans, one Mansfield College lecturer, a Presbyterian, and some "advanced churchmen" like Conybeare, she will be rather particularly important in making what Hugh would call our "bright unsectarian time" go smoothly.

(*To her Brother Hugh.*)

Tremans.
Nov. 18th.

. . . . .

Nothing very much is happening here and yet the usual whirlpool of Horsted Keynes appears to go on.

Mother and I positively went out to lunch at the Freshfields' last Saturday—and it was really like a fairy place—the terraces, and the gate in them just opening on to the valley without perceptible way down, only golden and dark woods climbing up the other side, and where the valley opens at the end, range beyond range of transparent hills.

. . . . .

We have got a man so typical that he becomes humorous. He proposed that we should pay for a gun licence for him to shoot the rabbits (our rabbits probably in our time) and then enquired, "Shall I have all, or shall we go shares?" He is so gloomy that it almost makes one hilarious—but the worst is that I am afraid he will hang on like a limpet. He can't drive (which is sometimes desirable for the luggage-cart), he appears never to

have driven a nail in his whole life long ; he nearly cried because his kitchen ceiling hadn't been white-washed and he might have to move his things. But the worst of it is that he wants to stay. That's the bitter thing.

A pair of large green woodpeckers flew all about the orchard the day before yesterday. I hope *they* may wish to stay. Yaffling would be quite a new accomplishment for Matilda.*

. . . . .

* A grey parrot.

CHAPTER XII

DIARY AND LETTERS

At this time I used to keep a Diary which I sent to Tremans, so that they might know what was happening to me, and bargaining that they would keep a similar Diary which should be sent to me. The following extracts were some of Maggie's contributions to the volume. The plan was, unfortunately, short-lived.

(*Diary.*)

Dec. 19, 1904.

Professor Bevan to dinner, very caustic and amusing. I asked what I believed to be an intelligent question as to whether there was any "higher" Mohammedanism. He gave a hoot of laughter and said there were 72 sects. He told a funny story of Duchesne, who had a friend who was writing on Churches in Rome and was warned by the authorities that he must not make too free with the legends, critically; because the people believed them. "After that," said Duchesne, "he walked about among the legends like a cat among the wine glasses."

A. C. Benson. R. H. Benson. E. F. Benson.

Photo by H. Abbott, Lindfield.]

Maggie Benson. Mrs. Benson. Beth.

1904. At Tremans.

[*To face page* 332.

Jan. 5th, '05.

Mr. Albert Dicey came to lunch with the Bryces, with the childlike smile of one who had decided on an outing, and wished to please and be pleased. He said he liked *any* street in London better than *any* place in the country, adding hastily (Mr. Bryce opposite) that it was a nice change; that the *only* advantage the country possessed—*i.e.*, that he could walk without looking where he was going—it had lost now owing to motors. But it was a nice change.

Mullion.

It was rather a relief to come here, where there is practically nobody else—nothing but cliff and sea. I've been to see Mary Munday, very vivid, full of enthusiasm, and talking about glory! I gave her the photograph of Papa's grave, she said, "Miss Benson, I do worship things like this, not worship, you know, in one way, but I do 'preciate them, and 'tis not the body only, 'tis the soul"—she pointed to his photograph—"oh the soul of it!" She flamed with enthusiasm describing "how glorious it must be to be rich, to be able to be stewards of God, and be Ministers to those who were to be heirs of Salvation." She talks in a kind of rapture, being 77 years old and living with a brother on 7*s.* a week and a little charity.

Mullion.

We had a delightful talk with an old fisherman at Mullion one day, a *huer* who has to blow a trumpet when pilchard "schools" and other shoals are seen. He was very clear in his descriptions of the difficulties about the net fishing, and crab and

lobster fishing. He commented on the rising generation ; they are said to be, each generation, " smaller and wiser " than the last. He confirmed the smaller by pointing out his son, but said he was not quite sure about the wiser. The dog-fish are doing so much damage to nets that fishing is stopped in some places. They will have to be blown up with dynamite.

Tremans.

We had a splendid mustering of girls yesterday, while rank and fashion came to look on at the inauguration.* It began with a squabble, for at the last moment the old Club would not give up the bats and wickets, as they had promised to do ; but we borrowed some old ones and began merrily. The wickets are about 4 feet high, and the bats small wooden bats.

Such a curious thing has happened in the garden. On Sunday, walking by two big pots in which small pots of hydrangea were placed, I heard the sharp note of a bird, could not find it anywhere, till stooping down to look at the hydrangea, I saw deep down in the pot 3 yellow beaks of nearly fledged birds—I thought probably tits. So I went away, with a feeling of hidden treasure. On Tuesday I took Aunt Em to see them, but looking in could not see the birds at first, then I saw they were *dead*, one crouched on the stones, the others fallen over breast upwards. They were tits and nearly fully fledged, just where they had been before. This was so dreadful somehow that we really couldn't speak of it, and I thought of the little birds probably already beginning

* Of a " Stool-ball " Club, an old Sussex game.

to feel the want of food while I was so carefully stealing away, not to disturb them. Then to-day when Constance came (who knows about birds) I took her there, partly to take away the little bodies, partly to ask her to explain how it happened. My own theory was this—tits have a *large* nestful—I thought they had led out the strongest and deserted the weakest.

I took up the pot to see if there had been a nest *under*; there was, and in it *two well-fledged great tits* who flew away, blundered back to us, and then flew up to trees and across the garden, while their parents suddenly appeared on a holly-tree above, and scolded us well. This is more mysterious than ever—but I fancy my first theory was probably right, and that the two birds may have come back after a day or two, during which the 3 had died, (little birds die very easily of hunger) to rest in their old nest. I don't know why I feel that these two healthy birds somehow made up for the three little dead bodies—and yet I am half angry with them too!

Birds are very interesting this year. Linnets have appeared, two or three pairs of them, in this garden and elsewhere. Corrie Marshall, cutting the ivy on the wall, found an empty nest which a blackbird had begun to build; I had seen him at it, where it was well sheltered; but now the hen is sitting in it, fairly in view, about the height of one's eye; also in a trained plum-tree near the pavement, a thrush is sitting full in view. There I sat with cat and dog, while she sat a little above, looking down on us. They are very bold, and building everywhere, as fast as the London County Council, following up one nest by another.

At Lambeth.

I believe the general kindliness to animals is improving the relations between animals themselves. As I passed wharf gates in London, a little black cat was lifting up her face to kiss a nice black spaniel. Then in Fred's house his cat walked about with just the same assurance as his dog.

I stayed at Lambeth for 10 days—it is a big going concern one feels, turning out wholesome and Christian relations with all kinds of people and things, on a large scale too, nothing very subtle or mystical or artistic or ecclesiastical about it, but a strong sound influence.

The Archbishop, whom indeed one only saw at a distance, on Sunday talked on Assyria,—a funny situation ; difficulties created by the Patriarch (aged about 17 or 18) being tiresome about his lessons, and an elderly missionary having too romantic an admiration for the Patriarch's sister,—and our teachers' scheme, for 1½ hours in the garden, and was quite delightful.

The position of guests is funny and pleasant, you go about just exactly as you like, go in to lunch without your host and hostess, with a chaplain or secretary and assemble at tea without anybody.

Archdeacon Watkins was there two evenings with as usual some good stories—a curious one of Lightfoot's inaccuracies, who not only preached but printed a sermon, in which he accounted for the dedication of a church to S. Andrew by saying that as another Church had been dedicated to S. Simon, the founders wished to call it by the name of *Zebedee's other son.*

Tremans.

July 16. We have had a nice peaceful time at home. Mother and Lucy have been at Lambeth part of the time, and Kitty Lea with her two little boys has been here. The eldest, who last year fished up toys, previously attached to the rod, from the bottom of the lake, this time brought a fishing-rod, and fished for a week unsuccessfully with his nursery maid. Finally came the day when the lake was covered with magnetic fishes and ducks which he got out with a net; after the first shout he went pretty soberly to work, saying "Rosa is wrong." It appeared that she had said there was nothing in the lake. Then this year (he is 4) came the question how they got there; he finally decided that they were born as live animals, died, and thereupon became toys.

Tremans.

July 25.

In the course of conversation Mother said she had been told by a girl once that it was supposed that after confession of serious wrongdoing, in order to be restored to communion, the penitent must eat 7 lbs. of *hay*.

Tremans.

July 26.

Beth came to say good-night, and found me looking at the papers, and reproved me, "You'll get thinking about it and not go to sleep." "Do *you?*" "Yes, if I hear things and get thinking about them." "What sort of things?" "If they are behaving so quarrelsome in Parliament, or bad

people are killing each other." Imagine the old darling lying awake over a vote of want of confidence!

Tremans.

Aug. 2.

Arthur and Edie here. Arthur was talking about Mark Pattison to-night, so I am going to record here my only sight of him. When I first went to Oxford, I was sitting in the garden with my tame goldfinch, which as usual was attracting other goldfinches. Miss Wordsworth wheeled into the garden an old man with a drawn parchmenty face, and brought him up to me and left us. He made some amiable and pretty remark about the Madonna and the goldfinch, and talked pleasantly to me about birds as far as I remember—a quaint incident and pleasant, as one's only sight of a bitter and cynical man.

Tremans.

Thurs.

Mrs. Mylne went. Lucy to London. Mother to Croydon to see Hutchy and a spiritualist. The spiritualist walked back with her to Croydon, and described Papa walking on one side of her, a French Abbé (Hugh's "guide")—apparently wearing his name and date 1732 on a label—between them, and *Zola* in front.

Tremans.

Miss Hodgson described how her great-aunt was doing lessons with Miss Croker the adopted daughter of the first Lord of the Admiralty on the day of Queen Victoria's accession. The Queen

came in and said "Miss Allworth, I am Queen of England, and I wish my first present to be to you. What shall it be? I shall rule my kingdom on Bible principles, so I will go out into High Street, Kensington, and buy you a Bible." She did so, and wrote in it "Victoria Regina, 1837." That Bible is bequeathed to Miss Hodgson.

I had 3 pleasant days in bed—my room is so delicious for being laid up in—with the walnut-tree and the pines opposite in the day, or the fire flickering in the two queer recesses at evening, and the long panelled cupboard by me, and all sorts of reminiscences in sketches, Greek and Egyptian figures and vases, of all sorts of places.

(*To her Brother Arthur.*)

Old Palace,
Canterbury.
Nov. 27.

. . . . . .

The Dog improves even on his first fascinating appearance. On the second day he was left alone in the garden and therefore went at once to the station, which was very sensible. I find Roderick Dhu is one of the pedigree names, and Roderick is near enough to Rover to be no shock. I sent his "ransom" when he came, as it appears to be the novel plan. If you can imagine a dog as being like a faun in grace of attitude, and a certain timid air of good breeding—that is what he is like. But I hope he will be thoroughly at home by the time you come back.

. . . . . .

(*To her Brother Hugh.*)

Falmouth.
Jan. 21, '05.

. . . . .

So many thanks about the hymns and the severity of your strictures. It seems to me there is no subject about which people are narrower than hymns—why *not* sing Meditation sometimes? I'll print "meditation" at the top if you like. Many of the Psalms are subjective, so are the majority of favourite anthems; and the opposite of caviare and sardines is not farinaceous food necessarily, but proper wholesome meat.

Will you give Arthur, Fred and me the suggested presents? Did you like mine to you? because you haven't mentioned it. You needn't have it if you don't care for it. I feel this is coarse but necessary.

(*To her Brother Arthur.*)

Falmouth.
Feb. 26th (1905).

. . . . .

The warm feeling of this place is quite delightful, even if it is sometimes a little trying to be asked to a tea-*party*—I mean *party*, they exist here—*every* day in the week. I like the Quakers *so* much; I have been to their meeting this morning; and also round Mr. Fox's garden, and had robin after robin told to come to my hand for crumbs; each eyed my fur coat, and obeyed his voice.

. . . . .

(*To her Brother Arthur.*)

Mullion.
April 3rd, '05.

. . . . .

Mother is joining us here on Monday. *My* chief occupation is being here until it is warm enough to go home. *Her* occupation is settling the church affairs in Truro ; she is going back for a night or two presently to finish settling them. We have been in Truro also for two days, and really the Cathedral is very beautiful, and beautifies the whole beautiful place. With the hills and the Fal and the tender colouring of the country, and the creamy colouring of the Cathedral, it is all so unique. *Do* go down there some day !

I have been reading your diary again with great interest ; but why have you ceased to ornament the outside ?

Your fatalist doctrine about depression surprises me. I had always thought of it as a thing that one was eminently called upon to treat, both physically and mentally. But then my depression makes me so extremely disagreeable. Of course when one was strong, change of scene and exercise were natural and easy remedies ; and one of the worst parts of being ill was being cut off from that remedy, as one had generally to rest, instead of doing anything to change the current of thought—and of course was dependent on the people who surrounded one. I remember the sickening, imprisoned feeling of *desiring* solitude, and knowing that one was absolutely dependent on the people with whom depression made one nervously at cross-purposes. I think it is through that sort of thing that one finds how

egotistic it is; and egotistic on one string—the evils of life—and that the only radical cure is a radical change of centre; just as the only cure at the time is a change in the centre of thought.

One can't help it by direct argument very often, because, after all, things *are* quite as bad as one can imagine them; but then they are also quite as good as one can imagine them. I mean each line of thought radiates infinitely, and you can follow it infinitely if you choose. It is in itself true, but it is not true in proportion to the whole.

"All the earth is full of darkness and cruel habitation" was one of the things which used to ring in my head—and of course it is undeniable, as long as you choose to follow out that line of thought alone. But the contrary is also true, and whereas one cannot combat the first negatively, because it cannot truly be denied, one can fling oneself on the other stream of thought which cuts across it.

I fear this is hardly lucid,—but I am not at all expert in practice.

. . . . .

(*To her Brother Hugh.*)

Tremans.
April 15th.

. . . . .

I have a gorgeous story of a dream dreamt in Horsted Keynes by one of the village people, owing, she says, to Mama's "not getting a look in" with the psalms now, as they have them sung not said; but "it *did* use to be a race," she said.

. . . . .

(*To her Brother Hugh.*)

Tremans.
(1905.)

. . . We have been reading the King's Achievement out loud ; and I do think it a *much* better book than I had remembered : it's *beautifully* written—a pleasure to read ; and either you have improved it very much in concentration, or it was not so invertebrate as I thought. Still it has faults, and I don't think it so good as the others—it's not so *engaging*, though Beatrice is really very fine indeed, and really I do give you credit for understanding the way in which women can be friends. So few people do understand, and I can't remember any man, a novelist, who does.

Beth wished me to say that she thought some of the people were very unkind and " crewel " ; but sometimes they were very kind and loving, and altogether it ended better than she expected ; but she does wish you would write a book about people who were less disagreeable with one another.

(*To her Mother.*)

Lambeth Palace.
(? 1905.)

Isn't this an amusing American letter, that I may " know the effect of Papa's life work on Mr. M'Cosh "—but they were very disarming people, and talked so enthusiastically and affectionately of him and of you.

I am staying in bed a good deal this morning, like a good girl. It's a queer independent life here—I feel anyone might quite easily be lost like the cow in the Winter Palace—and I'm enjoying it *hugely*, please tell L. After all her exertions, I feel a mere *pauper*, as I stir no hand even to help with cards, like the little American girls, and I merely fill up the room of better people. But as I *am* here this time, I'm going to enjoy it.

. . . . .

(*To her Brother Arthur.*)

Tremans.
May 16th, 1905.

. . . . .

The Queen's book is quite astonishing, but it seems all so complete, is so harmonious—I mean shows so well and consistently the development of her mind and character, of relations public and private, and relations to people, that I don't believe you'll half get the credit of *selection*. People will say "these were obviously the most important letters," and won't realise selection at all.

. . . . .

She seems to one "docile" in the most perfect sense—knowing from whom to learn—passing on from one to another, *re-acting* upon her teaching, so as to grow beyond her teachers as a docile person should.

. . . . .

Some of the family really must emigrate, or English literature will be flooded.

The Mission here has begun; Beth, a kitchenmaid

and I were the only people left in the house last night. Again this afternoon the house emptied itself, and two wailing children were brought in, so that their mothers might go to the service. Beth soon produced peace.

. . . . . .

(*To S. A. McDowall.*)

Tremans.
(September 2, 1905.)

. . . . . .

Here I am in the shelter with 13 turkeys walking about, and several chickens, much out of their proper sphere, scratching in front.

Mother and Hugh have just passed me to go a walk, Hugh in flowing cassock with a cigarette and the *very* oldest shoes I ever saw; the sort you find washed up on the sea beach. As he has just received £75 *advanced* royalties on two books which won't be published till next year, I told him this should not be, but he said it was "right."

His second novel (Henry VIII.) is coming out now; in 1906, *The Hermit*, a Henry VI. book, and a Queen Mary book; in 1907, a Charles II. book; and he is beginning to plan another!

. . . . . .

In between Fred with his terrier and *his* friends, and Hugh with his old shoes and *his* friends, we have had Arthur with *his* friends going on all the time, among them two elderly and visionary Eton Masters —a nice contrast to the rest.

What else? Beth had her 87th birthday. I've

got a new pigeon-cote, square, on a pole, painted white with a green roof. Roddy has learnt to sneeze.

. . . . .

(*To her Brother Arthur.*)

Tremans.
Sept. 14th.

. . . . .

And now—this is the only point for answer, and then not unless you wish.

You are, I know, a fellow-believer in the advisability of saying frankly, if one thinks there may have been a shadow of vexation, "Was there anything wrong, and if so can it be put right?" Long ago, about 1898 or 99, you and I wrote frankly to one another, and things have been different—increasingly dear and intimate ever since. You have so accustomed us to increasing serenity and happiness at home lately that perhaps one takes too seriously the little shadow of depression that was on you the last days at home. It may have been just a passing mood that all of us are subject to, but if anything was wrong that could be put right, do tell me. If not, *one word* on a postcard will be enough to set one's mind at rest.

(*Diary.*)

Tremans.
Nov. 25th, 1905.

I read a Daniel lesson with Beth the other Sunday; at the end she said she had never liked Daniel. "Why not?" Oh it was so dreadful,

she had never liked it even when she was a girl. "What did she like then?" Oh, about the babies —Jesus Christ and John. "And Moses?" Nettie suggested. She was not sure of that. She was afraid Moses was rather ungrateful to Pharaoh's daughter who had brought him up, when he went away from Egypt. I suggested that after all his mother had been his nurse. Yes, but she thought that was rather deceitful. Then I urged that, after all, the Israelites hadn't much opportunity for being grateful, considering the way Rameses behaved. "Yes," she said, "they was just as disagreeable one to another in them days as now."

To be disagreeable one to another is the worst condemnation—or "there isn't so much love in——" "She's so kind and loving," is highest praise.

Then she heard the second lesson, with eagerness, and said, "Oh, if people only would follow that example." It is beautiful reading to her, she has such rapt attention, and says sometimes, as in the epistle, "Yes, yes," quite unconsciously.

(*To Miss Bevan.*)

Tremans.
Dec. 21, 1905.

I shan't get much time probably for writing to-day. Lucy left before dawn, and Mother and I are together alone till dinner. We are going to read a text-book on local government by way of refreshment . . . We both want to know about it . . . Since beginning this I have been out for a walk with Mother, after we had read about municipal boroughs and urban districts; and we looked at

a futile traction-engine which got stuck, and discussed sacerdotalism and the R. C. Church and people's characters.

(*To Miss Bevan.*)

Tremans.
Dec. 29, 1905.

I want to write more about your letter, but I have had such an absurd morning that I can't. This was the order or disorder of it—

8.30. Mother came in, before going to London with Lucy for the day.

9. Beth, conversation about shortcomings of the cook, especially what was done with some sausages.

10.15. While I had my hair done, my mother's maid came in much gloom about the Stool-ball Club's entertainment.

10.30. Coachman. Acute crisis about new horse. Then to cook with tactful and leading questions and suggestions.

11. To Arthur and my aunt, when there came a stream of telegrams so that the boy who brought one carried away four, and another arrived directly after.

11.45. Began my book ; fire, sofa and bedroom.

11.50. Nurse for an interview, in the middle of which came Arthur about a book.

Back to my room and book.

12.15. Midday letters. Horse crisis more acute ; up to Arthur about the other book, and back to my room.

12.30. My aunt to say one telegram hadn't gone,

consequent rush downstairs. Back to book and room.

12.45. Stool-ball entertainment crisis more acute. Back to book. Then a message from the cook.

1. Beth to say she wouldn't interrupt me. Back to book till 1.20—and there's the gong for lunch.

And since then another telegram ; and the blacksmith's daughter on the Stool-ball Club crisis. I fear I do rather waste time in small ways !

(*To Miss Bevan.*)

Tremans.

One of the F——s and some friends have just been in to tea. I haven't made any way with them. Did I tell you about them ? With every appearance of unreserve, they have got a strong Scotch barrier well down in front. I tried to open it up with patterns of dresses to-day, as they confessed to crying about their clothes if they didn't fit ; but though it roused a feverish energy and gained me many suggestions, I got no further.

(*To Miss Bevan.*)

Tremans.

I'm beginning to have a good deal of quiet time to myself. My Aunt Nora sometimes sits with me in the shelter and works too . . . I don't generally stay out after 3.30, and in the time I am out, I have been by myself feeding robins, and looking after cats. Another cat, whom I had invariably discouraged firmly, came and sat on my knee the other

day with such serene intention that I gave in. Then I'm in my room till 5, and try to get away early after tea, because I am really wanting to read and write now . . . That is an ideal scheme, but it is generally broken in upon somewhere or other, as *e.g.*, by decorations on Saturday, and by carols on Christmas Day evening, and to-day by Miss——. I am resisting evening attractions, even a carol service in Church, and even a *very* long entertainment which depressed Mother and Lucy and my aunt a good deal yesterday, while Arthur and I stayed at home and talked about his book.

(*To Miss Bevan.*)

Tremans.

I have written 2 letters about the nurse, not about boots however. But I find that the burning subject now is whether she can possibly keep a tin box (quite a nice one) with dressings in it in her sitting-room.

There are really a lot of nursing things just now, but they aren't all boots and bicycles and boxes though there are some of those still (there's another box, you see, besides the tin box, but even that is arranged for now). For instance, besides the finance which is serious, and the intricate relations with A——, there come such questions as who is to read to a man who has been in bed since February and can't read ; of a girl (then apparently dying and now recovering) sent back in a really neglected state from a Cottage Hospital, and a vigorous reforming lady who is ready to take the matter up.

After all illness reaches into people's lives more quickly than anything else. I wish you thought more of the body. You are very unorthodox, and I shall ask the Bishop of Gibraltar to make you write an essay on σῶμα and σάρξ.

[A later letter.]

See what comes of not attending sufficiently to the weaknesses of human nature! I suppose it never occurred to you that the reforming lady might be the wife of the radical candidate, and the chief subscriber the cousin of the Conservative Member; and where would be the good of arranging who should clean the boots if there was no money to pay for the cleaning?

You see in such an arrangement—

(1) Nurses and doctors quarrel (especially London nurses and country doctors).

(2) Subscribers may quarrel, but ours don't, because they aren't on the Committee, and have nothing to do with management.

(3) Lodgers quarrel with landladies, about boots for instance.

Now you see Mother is the serenest person really for the centre of management, so it's really essential that one of us should be her secretary when she is at home, and her proxy when she is away. If she had to write to the reformer to tell her to come over 3 miles, whenever boots or boxes were in trouble, it wouldn't save her much.

(*To her Brother Arthur.*)

Tremans.
Wednesday.

. . . . . .

Beth is getting on capitally and so delighted with your letters and proud of hearing so often from you. We finished Paul together with "How can they think of such beautiful stories!" and, "How different from when we first heard of him when he was a little boy." It is very touching and full of meaning. I found it difficult to finish reading it aloud.

. . . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

Myr Hall,
Torquay.
March 1 (1906).

MY DEAREST MOTHER,

Your long letter was delightful. Indeed I wasn't deceiving the Crystalclear one. It is only her own Crystalclearness that makes her suspect the least shadow of deceit in others. But I'm really feeling remarkably well, and getting good time if not rapid progress with B. W.* Nettie is really a good deal better. She has begun teaching Molly and Baby Bible.

. . . . . .

I am going with her to the Electrical doctor this morning. He described his household as "a nest of Benson worshippers."

. . . . . .

The children are such fun. They bring me old letters, done up and marked immediate, every morning, which have to contain agitating news.

* B. W. = Benson's Works, *i.e.* The Venture of Rational Faith.

My imagination having dealt with financial ruin, diamond mines, rocs, etc., they are now taking it up themselves, and have just sent me a letter through the post, dictated by themselves, and describing all kinds of untoward secrets.

. . . . . .

You won't forget the Kissmi, will you; the other one is being kissed to death. Small sets of presents are brought to me every day; this morning I was imprisoned in the corner of my room and guarded by an excessively ferocious Moor and a Turk, with contorted faces and hoarse voices. Happily they were moved to have a dance in the passage, and I got my door locked, and was enabled to finish dressing.

. . . . . .

(*To Miss Bevan.*)

Torquay.
March 4, 1906.

N. and I are sitting out on the verandah on a really delicious afternoon, with the blue tits hanging and dangling on a bone hung on an arch in front of us; there were three together just now. We have been branching out from Driver, and reading Amos and Hosea in their proper places. I find I can cull a little from Burney in spite of the Hebrew, but oh! I *must* learn Hebrew—in the autumn when B. W. is done or surrendered, as I think it must be: indeed I did intend to settle one way or the other by the autumn, and if it still hangs on without success I shall give it up for good, but I am doing 1½ hours at it every day at present . . . .

(*To her Brother Arthur.*)

March 16, 1906.

I am sending back your diary, which has interested me quite particularly. I do know so *very* well that kind of depression, and I have just begun to realise the impossibility of getting out of it by following out the same train of thought and trying to urge it to a happier conclusion. Just as everything in the world is really (like Tennyson's " flower in the crannied wall ") the centre of an infinite world, so every point may be the centre point of an infinite happiness or misery, and the best correction comes by turning to one of the other infinite centres—in other words by a sense of proportion. Don't you think this is to some extent true?—perhaps trite.

. . . . .

(*To Miss Bevan.*)

Torquay.
March 18, '06.

One of the best things that you can do for me is to show me how infinitesimal small worries are, and how great the things are all around one. That is what one wants more and more, to live in the large things —love, and the Goodness of God and other people, and the beauty of the world and its interest—yet all these one takes too much as a matter of course. I want new eyes and ears and a new heart. That's all just now. Some time I should like a new body.

(*To Miss Bevan.*)

Torquay.
March 20, 1906.

I think what you say about the fluctuation of enjoyment is very true ; but I do think *also* that one allows anxiety and worry and morbidities to rob one of enjoyment unnecessarily, because when any people—Quietists or Salvation Army or Christian Scientists—resolutely set their minds on living on the other side of things, they do succeed. The Christian Scientists' success is purchased by much loss, I know ; but I don't think it's all necessarily purchased by loss.

(*To Miss Bevan.*)

Seaton.
March 30, 1906.

Have you read Maarten Maartens' *The Healers?* There is an elderly lady there who spends her whole life in writing an epic about Balaam. It reminds me dismally of myself and B. W.

(*To her Mother.*)

Seaton.
April 1st (1906).

. . . . . .

This is such a jolly place ; I've been enjoying it immensely. We went over to Lyme Regis—a really enchanting place, where one could have done endless sketches later in the year ; and we none of us jumped down steps nor got concussion of the brain on the Cobb.* It looked quite as if all those

* The reference is to Jane Austen's *Persuasion*.

people might have been going about still. Here there are two good sketches, if I could have time and sun to do them, just outside the door; and another enchanting one 10 minutes away. Yesterday we rowed over a perfectly calm and perfectly transparent sea, with gardens of sea-weed and aquamarine patches down below, and gulls sitting on low rocks and looking at you, round a chalk cliff which looked like a cathedral which had accidentally got incorporated into a hillside, to smugglers' caves, with an old boatman whose grandfather had died with £100 worth of smuggled goods on his back, and whose sympathies were entirely with the smugglers. And in them were three kinds of gulls; some which said "Oh" and some which said "Ha ha ha" and some which mewed.

. . . . .

(*To her Brother Arthur.*)

Seaton.
April 3, '06.

. . . . .

I am so much interested in your letter to the Bishop, and the subsequent meeting—but oh what a dreadful pity it is that the Clergy are like the Church of England; so "stodgy." The Dean gave us years ago, when we were starting the S. Paul Association, the strongest advice, not to put it under the clergy in any way; and we have been so glad of it ever since. I do believe the best plan with them is to begin a thing quite independently; then they wake up and see that something is going forward, and hurry up fearing otherwise that they will get left out.

. . . . . .

I did not mention my health because it is really all right, and I no longer feel like a piece of old and frayed elastic.

How nice your conditions of work sound! Aren't you enjoying it, now that the writing and teaching and sociability all fit in without overlapping too much?

I hope you get on with the book as quickly and smoothly as you could hope, which always seems to me both more quickly and smoothly than anyone else could hope!

. . . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

April 3 (1906).

. . . . . .

If one has any more or less permanent disability, one wants it to be as little of a barrier as possible to normal life. It is like a poor person living among rich. To have the poverty always in mind would really *make* a barrier—what one wants is a lighter touch, no *pressure*, a feeling of freedom, not the weight of feeling that if one doesn't talk others are wondering if it is vexation or something. Just as one would put the poverty out of consciousness, and let the poorer person slip in or out of plans with *freedom*.

. . . . . .

(*To Miss Beatrice Layman.*)

Tremans.
(1906.)

By the way, my dear Wesleyan hymn-book has a hymn of Wesley's very most Wesleyan kind, which

I'm personally trying to lay to heart. I'll show it you all when I see you—but this especially :

" Mollify our harsher will,
Each to each our tempers suit
By Thy modulating skill,
Heart to heart, as lute to lute,
Sweetly on our spirits move,
Gently touch the trembling strings,
Make the harmonies of love
Music for the King of Kings."

I am really all right and extremely well—but what with brothers and their works a little tired. The second goes to-day alas—but the 3rd comes on Monday. N. *wonderfully* better.

(*To a friend.*)

61, Egerton Gardens, S.W.
April 13 (1906).

I hope my writing on this envelope is sufficiently like Gladys' now. But I think it rather rude of you to say that I may write like her, but she may not write like me. That's because my writing is " shabby and illegible " I suppose ?

I meant to write more at length than I can. I've been to the three hours' service, and I'm stupid and tired. But I wanted to send you one line for Easter. I was glad of your letter. I don't think I had really thoroughly understood till just lately what you meant by going to the bottom of things. I wonder why you are reading Westcott's S. John and the study of the Gospels,—I should think they were very depressing,—I simply *cannot* remember what Westcott says in that book, it makes no groove in my mind at all, but just passes over it.

Yours, M. B.

(*To her Brother Arthur.*)

Tremans.
April 22, '06.

. . . . . .

In one way this odd outburst of books, in an unmarrying family, is better than marriage. After all, marriage generally does loosen the original family tie, whereas here—at any rate with you and Hugh, who express yourselves and not the reflection of your environment in your books—one gets to know you in a double way, by a sort of second channel. And with you especially, as the years go on, and with real happiness and gratitude, I seem to know you continually better. So I do through your books seem to understand a part which could not and should not be too much expressed in daily life, but which enlightens us all.

. . . . . .

(*To her Brother Arthur.*)

Tremans.
April 28th, '06.

. . . . . .

I was so very grateful for your most delightful letter. When you are so sympathetic and so encouraging, it makes one feel that one *must* make the effort to do as you urge, though I greatly fear now that the result can only be disappointing to myself and to any one who is so kind about it as you are. I have (and it is the third time of writing) got about half the book written, but I fear it gets duller as I get

older, and though I try to *learn* more, I don't get expert, but only less positive and more serious—less spirited, because the thing is large and more difficult than one thinks when one is young.

If I did work really 2 hours a day at that, it would be all I could do, or should wish to do, but the "petty dust" seems to choke one's movements, even on days that should be clear.

And many of the things that hinder are the dearest and most precious things in life. I wonder if you know how great an element in life is made by the growing intimacy with you, in being able through the diaries and the books to follow so much of your life and thought. I don't speak of the charm and interest of what you call your "sentimental volumes," which give one an aspect of the world, a sweetness in homely things which is of such peculiar value to any one whose *tether* is so short owing to health, and who wants to see the little things sweetly, and yet to look out through windows you make to many varied scenes, and into different lives. If I *can't* read "Beside Still Waters" before you want it back, I may perhaps see it later when it is more fully grown, for the chapter you read seems to me more mature and more sympathetic than anything you have written yet.

The Queen's life is wonderful and I am glad I may go on slowly with it. But it is *awful* work suggesting cuts. Everything is so telling, and it is mere desperation generally which makes one suggest that any one thing is just less interesting than the other.

What an unexpected and splendid character for a Queen—that little straight intelligent vigorous girl, with enough appetite for pleasure to be healthy, and

enough sense of duty for a regiment, and a warm and simple heart, and the dignity of reality.

. . . . .

(*To her Brother Arthur.*)

Alverton,
Truro.
May 3, '06.

. . . . .

It does seem difficult, to look into the looking-glass and directly into one's friends' faces. Can't be done without self-consciousness, unless it is done really privately. To look at one's own, and their photographs of some years ago, is free from this, and allows a rapid comparison with the present.

This is a most quiet sweet place, with silence in the house and birds singing rampantly outside, and reposeful Sisters who smile at you in passing.

. . . . . .

(*To her Brother Hugh.*)

61, Egerton Gardens, S.W.
May 11th, 1906.

. . . . .

Mr. P—— sent me his story. It is a good story and very *smartly* written, I thought; he asked for criticisms, but there really was hardly anything except one thing that he really could not alter—rather too *hard* a hand—too definite, too little indicative. If it were a sketch, one would put a good wash of water over his background.

. . . . .

(*To her Brother Arthur.*)

Barton Street,
May 13, '06.

. . . . .

I have been in the sisterhood at Alverton for the last fortnight—it was wonderfully delightful—a silent house and a garden *full* of birds. Woodpeckers build there, a Kingfisher lives there, and I heard reports of what *might* have been a hoopoe.

On Sunday they had a quiet day and (though I went out to lunch, not being included) I didn't speak to a single Sister till 8.30 p.m., when the Ex-Mother broke through her silence and came to talk to me. I loved all the quietness and the silent meals with " a good grave book " read out loud. I did a little of my philosophical book, and read a certain amount. Our " biblical study " plans involve a certain amount of business. What worries me is that if you profess a desire and urge the necessity of study—people suppose you therefore *know*—and particularly that you know the books they have read themselves. That is foolish.

CHAPTER XIII

THE SHADOW

MAGGIE was now living a full and interesting life at Tremans, with many companionships and activities. But about this time a shadow seems to have begun to creep over her mind. She had moods, which came and went, of great depression ; she lost heart easily, and began to attach an undue importance to matters which in old days she would have taken serenely enough. There were periods when my mother was almost alarmed by her insistence on some small detail, and her tendency to recur to certain lines of thought ; she became, too, strangely nervous and particular about matters affecting her health. Still she hid this all to a great extent in her own mind, and fought bravely against her dreary moods ; and I for one had really no idea that there was anything seriously amiss with her.

(*To her Mother.*)

Tremans.
May 16, 1906.

. . . . . .

Here I am back again from a peaceful 2 days with Beatrice, and oh the place *is* sweet ; everything

looking feathery and soft and clean and peaceful with the new foliage and herbage : and the garden looking well ; Roddy screaming welcome ; Beth as glad to get us back as to see us go ; 15 young turkeys, 10 new young chickens, 2 lady pigeons sitting, 5 black ducklings (only they are mixed) ; blossom out ; but hail coming down in showers every now and then.

. . . . .

(*To her Brother Arthur.*)

Tremans.
May 17, '06.

. . . . .

Yes, life is more interesting as one gets older, and personally I feel as if one were steering again into serener seas. You see, unlike you, I had such an extraordinarily happy time from my school days, through College years, and the beginning of my growing up, and then things seemed to crash—though I wouldn't now have been without the troubled times. I don't think I ever deliberately wanted an untroubled life. So here we are in the afternoon—a very sweet one, I do think, and not least in the way we seem to draw together again, for I remember so well, what you of course must have forgotten, my early pride in a certain preference you sometimes had for me—a forced preference very likely, for Nellie and Martin in those Wellington days paired off sometimes —but it was very dear to me no less. One thing I desire is to *want* some day to die; I never have wanted it, but I should like " to lay me down with a will " to feel as I (being a good sailor you see) feel when I

know there's nothing much between me and the sea and the sky at night.

. . . . .

(*To her Brother Hugh.*)

Tremans.
May 20.

My dearest Hugh,

It's ages since I had your letter, and the reasons I haven't answered it are various. In the first place, as you know, I went into a sisterhood for a fortnight, and liked it very much indeed. It was the sweetest place—large, airy, soothing rooms without much in them, and quiet dinners, and a garden where S. Francis might have had quite as various a congregation of birds as in the Arundel picture.

Then I came home, and oh it's perfect here, all the starry sort of flowers are out like white clematis and forget-me-not ; do you know the sort of *powdery* look of spring, when all the leaves too are in little knots on the boughs—and the grey parrot and Joey and the peacock and the kitten sit at the kitchen door—with the bantams close by—the cock bantam and the peacock had a duel the other day, and had to be separated. Even Roderick is getting rather nice.

. . . . .

One thing you promised about communities I didn't find in the sisterhood. They weren't *light-hearted*. Do you think that impression of light-heartedness is external ? What about accidie ?

. . . . .

Beth is much better, though not quite herself. I'm going to take her a little jaunt down to Canterbury

for two nights and then to Lambeth—by that time she will be frantic to come home again, and will then settle to "think about your coming," till you come, and plan and make surprises.

(*To her Brother Arthur.*)

Grosvenor Crescent Club.
June 16, '06.

. . . . .

It does sweeten life, and keep one's relations with people full of warm and pleasant *feeling* to get letters like yours sometimes. You can't fail to know what enjoyment is given me by things *you* call "kindnesses," and that you feel it so adds pleasure again.

You tell me to ask for something that I want. There is one thing I should like very much. I do want to begin sketching again, and find myself like Earl Harold—

> "The rust had eaten his harness bright
> And the rats had eaten his greyhound light."

There is a drawing-board which stretches water-colour paper with the least possible trouble to oneself, by means of a hinged piece working in a flat frame. You know how much more one can do if preparations are easy, and I should like a board like that, particularly from you who have encouraged my drawing from Lambeth days onwards.

I go back home to-morrow to find A—— established there, revelling in a really full flow of other people's iniquities, and able to "pity" them, which affords her intense satisfaction. Beth was better when I came; but she is more frail than she used to be, and much more easily cries when one goes away.

One feels we musn't all be away, if we can help it, more than a day or two at most.

. . . . .

(*To Miss Bevan.*)

Tremans.
June 30, 1906.

There's nothing the matter except tiredness. I *am* a little tired still. In fact I feel I shall have to relinquish a good deal a certain tattered remnant of pride that I retain, and not mind so much if I can't carry out things that I begin to do, and if I seem to fail you rather just when I should like to help. I feel sure we shall get the most we can out of things if I *plan* to do things with you, that I may not ultimately be able to do. Of course if I can't do them, it comes rather hardly upon you. And it is disappointing to me; but, for myself, I've learned that it is the better way, and that one can take disappointments of that kind fairly lightly if one allows for the possibility.

(*To her Brother Arthur.*)

Tremans.
July 18, '06.

. . . . .

We have two really nice babies in the house. One of 3 years and one of six months old. The younger practically never cries, and generally looks as if he had been designed as a symbol of Innocence,

or Dependence, or Childhood. The elder reminds me always of the child in the Story without an End. Not that he is like the pictures—he is far prettier—but has the same look of romance and mysteriousness which the pictures somehow conveyed to us, and utter suitability to the place—even when he is *really* only speculating on whether I have any chocolates in some concealed pocket.

. . . . .

(*To Miss Gourlay.*)

Tremans.
Aug. 21, 1906.

. . . . .

Well now, you see I am brought up against *reality*, which is always a sustaining thing. I think bitterness and fret come mostly from false ideas, false hopes and false fears—(yours came from false fears). When one says *these things are so*, the whole case is simpler.

. . . . .

(*To Miss Bevan.*)

Tremans.
August 24, 1906.

In spite of your saying I had better not write I think I shall, for even if one of my extremely precious letters were lost, as you suggest, I don't see that the course of the world would be disturbed.

. . . I have been making Fred read some of my stories written years ago, and he has been criticizing most usefully—if only I had vigour enough to attend to his criticisms. Arthur has offered to *force* an

Editor to take at least one of them—poor man, so I have to select. I've refused to write a notice for the Church Quarterly on the new English Hymnal—I'm sorry, but I couldn't manage it.

Hugh will arrive on Tuesday with a few more novels. It is Beth's 88th birthday. Do send her a congratulatory picture post-card from somewhere. She would love it . . . I am sorry that the Protestantism of Holland weighs on you so much, but it must be wonderfully dreary.

I have given up chasing turkeys, and am gradually giving up fussing about anything. I wish I could give it up quite . . . I am sorry about Switzerland, but I suppose sometimes in the long run some of the things that seem the least good, the least desired, do turn out to have been the most worth doing.

(*To Miss Bevan.*)

Ilkley.
September 10, 1906.

The want of serenity is so absolutely against everything one believes in ; I mean it's nothing else but flat contradiction to everything one believes of the Fatherhood of God to hug our anxieties as we do ; and we get the due reward of it too in the waste of both time and force that we both suffer from. I am beginning to try to meditate again—I wish you would too—even for twenty minutes in the day. I mean, not to meditate on the things you are doing or ought to do, but on the truths furthest removed from that. It is beginning to grow upon me that when I get overtired, I get into fusses about detail, or paroxysms of anxiety, mostly unnecessary—and

quite futile. I think you are so busy planting and watering that you sometimes tend to forget a little that the result doesn't depend wholly on your efforts, or the efforts of other people. Don't you think you give too large a place to effort? ... . I am so glad you are swimming. It is a thing I dream about.

(*To Miss Bevan.*)

Ilkley.
September 13, 1906.

About Meditation, I'll tell you about the plan I'm trying just now which commends itself to me. It has a certain amount of definite form, which is of use, I think, to people who are unpractised, or whose thoughts wander much.

It is advised that one should fix the subject—some incident, some idea, or some saying, the evening before. Then begin the Meditation with

Recollection
Adoration
The consciousness of one's nothingness; of the way in which sin keeps one from perception; the laying aside of oneself and expectation of enlightenment from God.

Then (1) the imagination (if it is an incident or a saying) of all the circumstances—even as far as possible bringing the senses to help in imagining, sight, hearing, sometimes taste, smell, touch—according to the Ignatian method. (2) A prayer to God for light.

This is called the Prelude.

Then bringing (1) the memory to bear on the main points of thought. (2) Letting those points

sink into the understanding. (3) Bringing the will to bear (a) by stimulating the emotion towards the main point, (b) by forming resolution or attitude of the whole will.

As I told you, I have never felt I was very successful in Meditation, but I intend to go on as I do feel it very necessary. Among the subjects I have been taking are those bearing on anxiety ; or losing oneself in activities and details—" Be not anxious about your life "—" Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things." I don't know about connected subjects. I did once go through the Gospel of S. Luke in this way. I certainly think it is useful to have some kind of plan, and I'm going to take the 4th Chapter of the 1st Epistle of S. John now. Some people recommend that one should repeat the same subject.

(*To Miss Bevan.*)

I hope you may be able to get A—— to talk freely. Of course one of the symptoms of depression very often is the difficulty of expressing it, and it isn't *always* better expressed ; but what always does good, I think, is to know that other people who are leading a serene and rational life have been through the same thing and have come out of it. Nothing ever did me more good than when a doctor who had been trying to make me express myself said, on my beginning to confess that I was troubled with depression : " Oh, we all have that." But of course if there is something definitely worrying it changes matters rather.

(*To Miss Bevan.*)

Ilkley.
September 14, 1906.

I am going to write a letter to you in bits as I move along out of doors. I'm stupefied with B. W. . . . When am I going to begin my reading? I suppose I must try to finish B. W. first. I have just read it straight through, and it seems to say more or less what I intended, but it wants *pointing*, and the language is simply hideous. I seem unable to write in a pleasant and lucid style. I wish I could express myself like Arthur. I wonder whether you are going to try to write this autumn. I wish I could think you were.

(*To her Brother Arthur.*)

Ilkley.
Sept. 17, '06.

. . . . . .

I talked to mother rather fully then about the cause of my depression and I fear communicated it to her for the time. I do regret it, I mean that I chose my time so inconsiderately. I trust it won't occur again, it was a thing I had had on my mind for a long time, and it is done with now.

But in any case I feel—partly through health but much I fear by character—that I fill the required place badly. I have felt this indeed very little with you of late years, for I have been conscious of a steadily growing friendship, but there is a sort of elasticity I know I lack, which is much needed when so many people of keen and nervous temperament

are brought together—who on the whole too care for each other more and hold together as a family more than most. Mother has it, of course, and it is what Fred essentially demands. I fear I have little of it, and I can only plead that it is made much more difficult by ill-health than anyone who is strong and capable can know. I know you know all the tortures of nervous depression, more than I do—but I think one gets less elastic when one can't escape by activities from the circle of oneself.

. . . . .

(*To Miss Bevan.*)

Ilkley.
Sept. 18, 1906.

I really think serenity is one of the greatest helps. Indeed if one can hold to fundamental serenity, relying on the fact that what happens is the Will of God and is the best thing even if it comes about through one's own mistake, I believe it will go of its own accord . . . I am trying so hard to leave off fussing. It's the ruin of life.

(*To Miss Bevan.*)

Ilkley.

Though one gets taken out of oneself, one tends to revert—by all sorts of backways. More and more I find out how very *clever* the devil is, and when you think you have escaped him one way, he waits round a corner to catch you and bring you back. There *are* so many ways. [She goes on to speak of great affection for another person as being one of the ways

in which one is taken out of oneself. Yet even this is not free from danger, for one gets "borne back" into thinking of one's own shortcomings.] And then the person who cares for you may tend to consider you too much, to consider your wants disproportionately to those of other people, and in this way bring you back to the dangers from which you are seeking to escape. But if the two who love one another both desire, however feebly and imperfectly, the same divine end, this love I can't separate from the love of God. This makes me anxious not to transgress in any smallest way any of the things which are due in tenderness and faithfulness to other people. And because one feels that it is due to the *person specially loved* that one should do so, it may even appear as if one were considering that person too little not in heart and mind indeed, but in action.

(*To her Mother.*)

Ilkley.
Sept. 19, 1906.

. . . . .

I'm sorry about the Rolfe atmosphere, but the real difficulty is that none of the Benson Bros. *can* stop writing. They are like the wild huntsman.

. . . . .

(*To her Brother Arthur.*)

Ilkley.
Sept. 21, 1906.

. . . . .

It is perfectly true that if I get depressed or overtired it wakes in me a kind of thin, harsh, critical attitude. I begin to realise more than I have ever

done before what an *odious* quality it is, I hope it won't disturb the peace of a family again. I regret that you ever felt it, except for the letter which somehow resulted from it ; for I feel what you say increases the reality of the relation between us.

. . . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

61, Egerton Gardens, S.W.
Oct. 11 (1906).

. . . . . .

I must just write and tell you that we have had such a *good* day at Lambeth—Lucy will tell you about it. I *do* wish you could have been there—I never saw the river look more exquisite, still, misty, with October reflections and summer heat, and 3 boats with red sails, one painted blue, all reflected in it. Then the service in Chapel was so nice—though none of the ceremonies were *eloquent.* The Archbishop spoke so delightfully to Gladys about her whole share in it and her work, that I can only just drag out of her what he said. Nettie was there and really liked it,—she is as sweet as it's possible to be.

. . . . . .

(*To her Mother.*)

61, Egerton Gardens, S.W.
Oct. 27th (1906).

. . . . . .

We went to a synagogue this morning—such beautiful singing, and such touching prayers. I had my Jewish prayer-book so that with the help of a friendly Jewess we could follow a little. We are just off to Trafalgar Square !

. . . . . .

(*To Miss Bevan.*)

Tremans.
November 13, 1906.

I have just finished writing B. W. That doesn't mean that I have finished writing out or correcting, but that I have finished the actual book—for at least the second time. Still I am glad to have done so much. It seemed interminable.

(*To her Mother.*)

Tremans.
Nov. 24, 1906.

. . . . . .

This is just one line to tell you I got back at lunch time and found all well here—Nettie and Margaret cheerful ; Beth wonderfully busy, so that she has no time for reading ; Roddy screaming with pleasure ; the cat under the pipes, and pigeons and bantams in ranks at the door.

I am going to have my class on Tuesday and a reading of plays sometime in the week I hope—and look forward to it all very much.

N. B.—Would you make a flighty and overdressed girl act the part of the smart and cheeky London girl with a flaming hat, who gets thoroughly scored off ? She would do it very well I think—or would you consider the moral effect adverse, or wholesome, or indifferent ?

. . . . .

(*To Miss Beatrice Layman.*)

Tremans.
(1906.)

I was so very sorry to get your telegram this morning ; I gathered it must have been very serious

Photo by H. Walter Barnett, Knightsbridge, S.W.]

MISS GOURLAY. MAGGIE.

1906.

[*To face page* 376.

from it, before I got your letter ; but from what you say I suppose there is still great danger. Such times are very difficult, and would be more, perhaps, except that one does not seem to fully realise things at the time—but I know your strong desire isn't for mere prolongation of life, but if it may be, for the best and fullest kind of life up to the end. That is what one feels so strongly about Beth—it's quite unlike what one feels about a younger person who may possibly re-construct life again—and sometimes there's a kind of peace too in great anxiety, in spite of the tension of feeling. And I think one must remember too that that is sometimes so with the person who is ill, even if it does not seem so on the outside—things take a new proportion, time seems to move in a different way. I shall be glad to know how things go if you can find time to write me a line, and I shall think of you.

(*To a friend.*)

Lambeth Palace.
Sunday. (1906.)

I know these times of just holding on—to prevent biting and scratching or anything else of the sort—make one feel just after *only* as if one had been pulled through a key-hole—but afterwards one finds sometimes that they have been more use than almost any other, and that the worst times come often soon before the best.

But of course they feel horrible at the time. I do know that.

Yours always,

M. B.

(*To her Brother Arthur.*)

Tremans.
Dec. 1, '06.

. . . . .

We have had an archdeacon and a rural dean here to-day and feel quite flattered—and wonder at the times when I felt contemptuous and bored with 40 of them.

. . . . .

(*To her Brother Hugh.*)

Tremans.
Dec. 18.

. . . . .

I think it's hard that with 3 brothers there should be nary a new book ready for me this week. It must be Self-denial week. Did you see "Signs of the Times" in *Punch?*

"Self-denial week. Mr. A. C. Benson refrains from publishing a book."

(*To a friend.*)

Tremans.
Dec. 20 (1906).

My dear G——,

I don't think your letter sounds at all as if you were going to give in, but remarkably as if you weren't. On the other hand, one does know that having a door slammed in one's face, in life, has very often been the very thing that has turned one about into a new and more desirable way.

Do quickly get some other things to do after dark —is your carving all right? Also I have begun to think that one loses a lot by not practising mental vision. Hugh seems to me to have enormously strengthened, and healthily, all his imaginative faculties by practising this, in the course of meditation in his case—bringing up a scene into mental vision, sound, touch even. The easiest thing I find to do it with is some poem like

"Deep on the convent roof."

He does it with the Bible—but one loses the greater part of one's *memories* by not revisiting them, too. And all this evidently increases perception enormously.

I wonder whether you could anyhow, struggle with yourself *less* and *drop* the things more—not say "I will fight with this fear"—but simply drop it. Simple, isn't it? but for distractions of thought (for example) many people recommend it.

(*To her Mother.*)

Tremans.
Jan. 31, 1907.

MY DEAREST MOTHER,

Streams of people flowed in ever since you went. (1) Mr. P—— and Beth bouncing into my room with flushed cheeks to say *she* couldn't have him up to her room; I was to go to the drawing-room, and she would just come down and speak to him, and then I could talk to him; so after a remonstrance, I collapsed and said very well, but he would think me a strange person who didn't

know much of my own house or the people in it! Then she gave in, and behaved as well as anyone could expect; and said afterwards (1) he wasn't a gentleman, (2) he had a baby-face, (3) he preferred, she expected, going with second-class people rather than first-class.

Your lovingest daughter,
M. B.

(*To S. A. McDowall.*)

Tremans.
Feb. 11, 1907.

. . . . . .

I feel I must have appeared so ungrateful for your quite delightful letter. But when you wrote I really wasn't up to much; and since then it has had the fate of those postponed letters which one has really cared to receive—namely, to be frequently taken out and postponed again, because one had not ample time for writing.

For indeed your letter touched me and made me grateful and glad. It has often seemed to me lately since you grew older, as if you were in a way like a younger brother—and I have so cared to know what you have let me see of the working of your mind, and your affection has been dear to me.

. . . . .

Mother asks me to thank you very much for your letter, and to say how sorry she was to miss you, and how much we should like you to come here for a few quiet days before your marriage, if arrangements here make it possible—but this she can't quite tell just yet.

. . . . .

(*To Miss Bevan.*)

39, Evelyn Gardens.
February 14, 1907.

Really your house is lovely. All the rooms have changed their shapes since I was here last. The drawing-room is much prettier even than I expected. I am sitting on the sofa now with a lower window open and it is deliciously warm and fresh. The whole house feels very warm, and your household is making us very comfortable. . . . My room is gorgeous, a perfect bower of roses. I'm going to look in at it again before dark . . . I do like being in your room. Some people's rooms are so much themselves. One characteristic thing I find is that as usual in your paper-case there is

1 inky sheet of paper,
2 envelopes addressed to Thurgood and Martin,
3 envelopes addressed to the Bishop of Gibraltar.

I have a great mind to send this in one.

(*To Miss Bevan.*)

In the train [on the way to Cornwall.]
Feb. 15, 1907.

We have just crossed into Cornwall by the great harbour at Devonport, with battleships and torpedoes lying in it, looking like great ugly noxious beasts . . . You say you spend your time reading and writing. I hope you don't write much. B—— tells me that you have written at length about Greek Testament arrangements. I wish you would try to throw off the responsibility for that just now. It is the time to do it, and to let people at home take their proper share, which will never happen if you don't take your hand off it . . .

(*To Miss Bevan.*)

Falmouth.
February 18, 1907.

I think what one learns to do more and more as one grows older is to keep hopefulness without definite hopes. One sees how little one really knows of what is best for other people, and how unexpectedly their lives work out, and unless one surrenders definite hopes, one doesn't give fair play. People can't expand or be at their best with anyone who has too definitely made up their mind as to what the best is. And then I think if one has one's mind on what they *haven't* done, it bars the way to possible expansion.

(*To Miss Bevan.*)

(1907.)

If you want to show anyone what they have missed in life through not caring for people, you can't do that by telling them so or by way of accusation (I mean with the atmosphere of accusation or judgment) as much as by having in yourself the quality of the thing they have missed . . . *E.g.*, if you see me do wrong and go on caring as much or more than before, and if you *mind*, it makes me see a thousand times more what the *quality* of it is, and makes me more hate the evil thing which hurts love, than if any number of people accused me or judged me in their minds. I don't mean that it is never good to feel oneself judged by someone else. It is sometimes very good, but it depends on the relation in which one stands to the person. Sometimes it is very hardening. If you are too near in

position and too alien in personal relation it cannot be done safely.

(*To Miss Bevan.*)

Falmouth.
February 20, 1907.

It was so stormy yesterday we couldn't get out at all, and now too we are sitting in a shelter looking at the sea, while a storm of rain and hail blows by. This will not sound so reviving to you as it is in reality to me. It's lovely. The sea is beginning to shine again like silver near the headlands, and faintly and clearly green and blue near the shore. The sea is quite clear water here, not nasty, thick, muddy water as at most English seaside places. Here is the sun again brilliantly, and such colours in the sea—all the translucent exquisite colours, and foam and freshness, and the shells and the sand.

(*To Miss Bevan.*)

Falmouth.
February 23, 1907.

I don't think it a good plan always to fill up the time that might be leisured by work which you don't *need* to do. You'll never get a holiday at that rate; and if you had the possibility of working leisurely later, you would be sure to get your time filled up by taking on something new. By the time this reaches you, you will only have ten days left. *Do* try to make good use of them, and do as little business as you can . . . I tried to learn a verse of Dante this morning which I thought would be very good for

you (and me, and N. and several other people). I've forgotten it mostly :

> "*Regnum coelorum* violenza pate
> Da caldo amore, e da viva speranza."

How many mistakes have I made ? The last line * means that they conquer it by its own divine will.

(*To Miss Bevan.*)

Falmouth.
Feb. 25, 1907.

We have been to such an exquisite Cornish garden to-day, with palms and citrons, and fruiting bananas, and tree-ferns, and snowdrops and crocuses, and birds that come round and chide you if you haven't brought cake.

Did you see the perfectly beautiful sunset yesterday evening ? The country looked so wonderful in it that I dreamed of rose-tinted country, with hills and trees which I was trying to sketch.

(*To Miss Bevan.*)

February 25 (1906 or '07).

If one cares for anyone very much, the fact that that person returns it in the same way is so much more important than their simple presence, that it swallows up the rest. I believe people do differ very much in this way. I always felt that if I were going to marry, I should go first for a long time by myself to some entirely flat place like the plains near Calais, and assimilate the fact. I think when I get what I want, it takes me a long time to assimilate it—and I can do without repeated supplies meantime. I don't think this illustration is very elegant.

* *E vinta vince con sua beninanza.*

(*To her Mother.*)

Fowey.
March 2 (1907).

We had a wonderfully leisurely journey here yesterday, and the distinction of having eleven boxes in the van and about 8 packages in the carriage earned us a great deal of consideration. When I travel with Nettie, we have waggons for our luggage like you and Lucy.

Much love to all.

Your lovingest daughter,
M. B.

(*To Miss Bevan.*)

Fowey.
March 2, 1907.

This is the most beautiful and queer place, just at the entrance of the harbour so that you look out to the open sea, and also up the creek of an inland river. It isn't a bit like England. The garden slopes down with little arbours and shelters on tiny terraces till one is just above the rocks and can look down on to the back of a seagull and see his yellow webbed feet paddling through green water. Even you would like the sea here.

(*To Miss Bevan.*)

Fowey.
March 11, 1907.

It has been sunny and we have been all the morning on the balcony over the sea doing B. W. and Cheyne's " Job and Solomon " . . . Your notes [*i.e.*, about B. W.] will be very useful, though I know

one of those chapters was so corrected that it could hardly have been intelligible ; and I think the standpoint is in some ways rather different here from what you have in mind. In this early part of the book I don't want to *assume* the Christian standpoint, only to argue that it is not *unreasonable*. How would you like " The substance of things hoped for " for a title ?

(*To her Brother Arthur.*)

S. Catharine's Hotel,
Fowey.
March 19 (1907).

. . . . .

Yes, I believe the mists will disperse. I think they must. They somehow seem to have risen to hide what is so much better, behind them.

. . . . .

(*Extract from letter to Miss Bevan.*)

Tremans.
April 12, 1907.

I'm so sorry not to answer your questions satisfactorily. There is really *nothing* the matter—but I suppose a certain tiredness and strain, and probably partly the weather produce a general depression against which I do struggle but not wholly successfully. It's quite unreal, so the less said about it the better. It will do me good to be with you, and you must make me think about other things . . . I will be happy. I ought to be and really am. Then I shall soon be well, for really there is very little amiss.

(*To her Brother Arthur.*)

39, Evelyn Gardens, S.W.
April 21, 1907.

MY DEAREST ARTHUR,

Thank you so very much for letting me see these strange sad letters. I expect it has been a relief to write ; and as curiously one sees the strange wilful, vague, impulsive character all through. I wonder what her stories were like ? I suppose not really good at all, as she does not speak of encouragement on your part. This is a singular story.

It was so nice coming to see your rooms, and the College, and all you had done in it. It looked on that raining afternoon such a dim, dignified place ; and I liked to hear your organ. I am up here for a few days more, and then next week mother and Lucy go abroad, so I shall mostly be quietly inhabiting Tremans during May.

Maggie Ponsonby came here to see me last night, and her chief theme was the necessity and desirability of your writing a play. She explained that the idea of a play now was the entire absence of plot, and a succession of scenes in which people revealed themselves simply as real human beings, and that she decided was the thing which you could do pre-eminently well. I suggested that *crises* of human feeling were also wanted, and that was not so much in your line ; she admitted that something of the kind was necessary.

Did you know that *Diana* Cholmondeley had suddenly blossomed out into an accepted play, after writing two which were considered exceedingly good by dramatic critics—but which had not been taken.

Didn't you think there was a very pleasant feeling about Tuesday's festivities—in spite of full rooms? They were so simple and real. But you of course had fled before the end.

Your loving,

M. B.

(*To her Brother Arthur.*)

39, Evelyn Gardens, S.W.
April 26, 1907.

My dearest Arthur,

I am much ashamed to find that I have missed writing to send you all very best wishes for your birthday. Not but that I habitually have to regret such failings, but you are so particularly kind in your remembrance. It isn't too late to wish you many happy returns of the day, I hope.

I am staying here till Monday next and then go back to Tremans to have a few days with Mother before she goes away. By the way I wrote to A—— to ask if I could see her. I couldn't, as she was condemned to silence, but I received no encouragement to ask again, so I fear that I am now in disfavour. You—according to Maggie Ponsonby, have been re-exalted—" the prophet Isaiah "—she said.

Don't think of answering this—please only take its good wishes and forgive their lateness, and if you can think of anything you want—*do* tell me sometime. I had intended to write and ask this before your birthday.

Your loving sister,

Margaret Benson.

(*To her Mother.*)

39, Evelyn Gardens, S.W.
April 27, 1907.

MY DEAREST MOTHER,

I have got your telegram. I am so relieved to hear that you are glad I went to the doctor. He was most re-assuring, as Gladys will have told you. About Dr. May I have done all I can do. I not only wrote to University College, "to be forwarded," but went up there, found my letter had been sent on, but that he was expected every day. I then left a card asking if he could see me—so there is really no more I can do. Amy came in here yesterday, and says she is going to see you to-morrow, so she'll tell you how much better I am. So many thanks for your post-card. I really don't know what I can do about Turkeys' eggs. Can Marshall not hear of some about? That is much the best plan. Otherwise I must try and get them through the Exchange and Mart or some other paper. Anyhow I had better wait till I get down. If he *can't* hear of others, he had better put her on Hens' eggs.

I'm sending you a country-side extract Nettie sent me about Roddie's food.

We are just off to the Zoo! so I must stop—that's our last dissipation.

Best love to all,
Your lovingest daughter,
MAGGIE.

(*To Miss Bevan.*)

Tremans.
April 30, 1907.

Thank you very much for your most beautiful and delightful letter. The place is prettier than you

can well imagine, with the cherry trees and the tulips and forget-me-nots. As Beth says, "It doesn't seem like a place to live in, but a place to go and see." And all the birds—the pigeons are so nice, and come following one halfway up the drive. I do trust I am serene in spirit when I can realise it—but I couldn't sleep, and have a heavy weight of stupidity. They are all so nice and delightful . . . And it is a help always to think of your love . . .

CHAPTER XIV

THE LAST YEARS

THE end of her happiness came swiftly at last. She concealed, except from those who were closest to her, the gathering of a deep depression and gloom which came and went, making life savourless and bitter, and the struggle to keep abreast of her duties almost intolerable. The disease which seemed to have been checked carried its ravages further. At Ilkley in 1906 she suffered from a fierce depression, and even said to her best friend that she feared that, if it were to continue, her mind might give way. The cloud lifted again; but the signs of what was happening are easy enough now to discern. She was full of mistrust and self-scrutiny and a morbid sense of failure. She blamed herself for not being equal to her duties, for not giving her friends and relations the exact sort of sympathy they required, for not filling her place in the world rightly; and at the same time her old tolerance failed her, and she tended to criticise others for not playing their part more strenuously and laboriously. In the winter of 1906 she had an attack of influenza, and went away in the early spring with Miss Gourlay and Miss Layman to Cornwall. There again she fell into deep depression of mind, and her letters to

me at the time, about some minute points of household arrangement, show me now, though I did not perceive it then, how deeply strained her whole being was. She came up to London, and consulted more than one doctor, but it was thought to be only a temporary derangement of health. She told me one day, long afterwards, how greatly she had suffered from tyrannous fancies, which she seemed unable to resist, such as seeing in the faces of people, whom she passed in the streets, underlying darknesses and vilenesses, old animal inheritances and evil taints of blood. She described to me how the world often appeared to her as suddenly phantasmal, as though everything except the actual objects on which her eyes rested were falling into dust and nothingness, and as if life were a confused cataract pouring into the void. Against these dreams of horror she fought with all her might, and her self-control at this time must have been wonderful. The last time I saw her in health was when she came to Cambridge for the wedding of her cousin, Stewart McDowall, whose friend and confidante she had long been. She travelled down with my mother from London, and went straight to the Church, where I joined them, and I remember the pale and beautiful smile with which she made room for me beside her. She came later to my rooms at Magdalene for tea, was interested in everything, and said a few words to me about our recent correspondence. " It was silly of me to take it so seriously and make such a fuss." Then she went home, and there followed days of sleeplessness and mental torment, and deep wretchedness, till there came a sudden collapse of mind and body alike. Yet even

that very night, when she went to her room with Miss Beatrice Layman to try and rest, she made a great effort, sent her love to her friends, and quoted the words of Browning :

> " If I stoop
> Into a dark tremendous sea of cloud,
> It is but for a time . . . "

There followed days of half-conscious misery, and deep anxiety, her one wish, whenever she could express it, being not to cause trouble in the house, but to be removed into quiet care. She was for a time in the charge of some good Sisters of Mercy, and we saw her occasionally, when she tried with all her might to be natural and self-possessed, and to hear about home doings and interests ; but a visit which I paid her alone showed me only too clearly, how utterly her mind had given way, though even then she was full of loving anxiety, and besought me not to come again, because it would be bad for me. This interview precipitated an illness of my own which had long been impending, and for over two years I was myself in great prostration. Maggie was then moved to a house for such cases near London,—the Priory, Roehampton—and was for a long time unable to see anyone except my mother occasionally, upon whom she greatly depended, but her whole life was submerged in storm-clouds and distracted visions. She received the tenderest and most sympathetic care.

Gradually, however, her health improved. I was able to see her in 1910. She was much altered, spoke low, and evidently suffered much from hopelessness and gloom ; but her memory for all the past was extraordinarily clear, and she liked nothing

better than talking about the old days. She was soon well enough to go out drives with me; and always preferred the streets of London to quieter places. We passed one day by St. Paul's, and she expressed a wish to go in. We went into the nave, and she knelt long in prayer, and I well remember the smile with which she said as we came out, "I never expected to be here again." After this we went to service there and at the Abbey, visited Lambeth, went to Hampton Court, to museums and picture galleries, and even to the theatre. She went, too, with her devoted friend Miss Bevan, to lectures at the British Academy given in French by Professor van Hoonacker of Louvain, on the Jewish Colony at Elephantine in the fifth century B.C., Maggie took full notes and discussed the subject afterwards with her usual acuteness. Miss Bevan tells me, too, that they went together in 1915 to Evensong at Westminster Abbey, where an intercession was used for those who had fallen in the war. Maggie was much interested in this, but her old critical faculty reviving, she expressed the difficulty which she felt. "If we pray for the departed, for *what* should we pray? That they may receive light or forgiveness. But can we make such prayers for the saints? Might we not rather expect them to pray for us? And if we are not to ask these things for all the departed, where then should the line be drawn?" She had wholly recovered her nerve, and I remember that one day, when she was to meet me at my Club, the taxi-cab in which she was being driven collided with another and was driven on to the pavement, an accident which she viewed with entire calmness and even amusement. Her talk

became humorous as of old, and she could laugh with much enjoyment over old stories and reminiscences. Indeed her intellect was never obscured. She would sometimes repeat long poems with perfect accuracy, and her letters were full of minute recollections. But she had rooted suspicions of many of her old friends, and a deep dread of she knew not what. She retained all her quickness and incisiveness of mind. My brother Hugh and I were with her one day and she made some accusation against a friend, which I controverted, and she said to me that I had failed in perception. Hugh intervened, and said that he agreed with me, to which Maggie said with a smile that he was always too generous and loyal.

She won, too, as she had always done, the devoted affection of her tender and careful nurse, Miss Holt, who discerned the true and beautiful character beyond the shadowed mind. "I often think of Miss Benson," she wrote to me since Maggie's death, "indeed I am always thinking about her, and thankful that I was allowed to know and love her."

Her room was bright and sunny, and looked out on to a quiet lawn and garden, with big trees. It was hung with many of her pictures, and she had her canary and many little treasures about her; she had at this time curious and beautiful fancies about birds, which she said were imprisoned spirits, she was sure.

In the garden at the Priory there were five robins who knew her quite well. As soon as she appeared they would come flying after her, and follow her along the path. She used to feed them with crumbs, and one robin was so tame that it would eat out of

her hand. Every morning after breakfast she scattered crumbs on her windowsill for the birds.

On Sundays, says Miss Holt, when too ill to go to Church, she always had her Prayer-Book and Greek Testament by her, and read the collect, Epistle and Gospel for the day; and as she used to do before she was ill, she always read the poem for the day in "The Christian Year." The one she specially liked was for the 21st Sunday after Trinity. She would also give her nurse some money to put for her into the offertory. Miss Bevan, who often went to her on Sundays, says that she was always to be found with her little pile of books of devotion beside her, and that she would often sing a hymn, such as "Shepherd Divine," in her soft low voice. Miss Bevan used to send her reproductions of sacred pictures, Botticelli and Fra Angelico, and these were always kept in view.

Later on, at Wimbledon, when she heard that the Vicar of the Church was arranging to have some devotional books in the Church for those who liked to come and read there, she sent him Jeremy Taylor's "Holy Living."

She studied the daily papers with great care, and no little detail, referring to anyone whom she had ever known, escaped her.

"I was inexpressibly touched," writes a friend of the Oxford days, "when a week or two after my marriage, in July, 1911, to my old friend and Oxford tutor, I received a little note from Maggie, wishing me joy. It was four years after her mental breakdown, and I had not thought that she knew or cared about passing events. But she said she had seen the notice in the papers, and it evidently struck some

chord of memory, vibrating back to Oxford, and awoke the old friendship between us which belonged to our college days."

One day—it must have been in 1913—I spent her birthday with her. We sate in the garden, and she talked quietly and sweetly of old days, without a word about her sad fancies. It was then that I first believed she would wholly recover; and she was soon afterwards moved to Wimbledon, to the care of a kindly doctor and his wife, where she had a pleasant drawing-room and garden, and lived a more or less normal life, mingling freely with the family, and pleased with the talk of the children; she took to reading and sketching, and was always anxious to hear any news about her old friends. She read my little memoir of my brother Hugh carefully, and suggested many improvements. How strong her mental powers then were, a small instance may show. I came to see her with a small book about Eucken in my hand. She turned over the pages and said, "It seems a sort of Hegelianism." I said to her that I never could get any clear ideas about philosophy, and she must explain to me what Hegelianism was. She gave me an admirable sketch of the whole theory, adding with a smile, "But all my philosophy is very rusty now!"

After this date she travelled a little—to Lowestoft, Bournemouth, and Falmouth, where she sketched and drove, and even made notes on the buildings and antiquities.

It was during her time at Falmouth that she visited Truro and Kenwyn. It gave her great pleasure to see once more the places in which some of the happiest years of her life were spent. She

also met several people whom she remembered. One of the officials on the steamer she recognised as the son of an old acquaintance, Mrs. Benney. She found the same verger at the Cathedral whom she had known, and walked round it with him. She always took the greatest interest in the Cathedral, and loved to talk about it. On this occasion she was much pleased to see the brass tablet which had been put up in memory of Beth near her father's tablet.

Then she drove to Lis Escop, and walked through the house. She went to Kenwyn Church, and sat in the same place where she had sat at her Confirmation ; and she also sat in the seat in which she used to sit by her mother. She remembered that the light coming through some blue glass in the window used to fall upon her face, and she liked to find it still the same as she sat there.

She saw a little book of stories, "The Court of the King," previously written, through the press, and made many corrections, while she also wrote a few reviews and even a poem or two.

But her mind never recovered its spring, while she continued much haunted by thoughts of intrigues against her which she supported by many ingenious instances. She was much distressed too by a sense of having lost her religious faith, though, as I have said, she often read the Bible and prayed, and said to me more than once that the world seemed empty of God. She could not understand why it was impossible for her to return home, though we hoped and hoped in vain ; but her stern conviction that her breakdown, of which she was perfectly conscious, had been contrived, rendered this impracticable.

Once, indeed, she had her wish for a little while

and came back on a flying visit, journeying by way of London to Horsted Keynes. She walked up to Tremans from the station, and came in, saying quietly to the maid, "Mary, I have come home." She talked with much animation that evening, and in the morning revisited every room, and refreshed her eyes with the sight of all the familiar household things ; but, alas, she might not stay, though I think the visit did her good, in spite of the fatigue resulting from it.

She saw a few visitors from time to time, but my brother Fred saw far more of her in her last years than anyone else, and constantly went down to Wimbledon to spend an afternoon. Maggie not infrequently went up to have tea with him at his house, or to go to some play or show with him. My brother says that he often felt conscious that her real self was very near the surface indeed, and that it was sometimes as if a veil which seemed to hang between her and the normal world was very thin, and hardly hid her from him. The fact that her malady obscured her intellect so little and left her memory so accurate and clear seemed to him to give a hopeful promise of her ultimate recovery. She had at times a little hope of her own, for she knew well how ill she had been ; and I can recollect the mixture of delight and pride with which she told me, soon after going to Wimbledon, that she had been twice to Church in one Sunday, and had enjoyed it greatly.

Mrs. Lea says, "I took my elder boy, her godson, with me the last time I went to see her. She had not seen him for a long time, and it was evidently one of her bad days ; but while he was in the room she

listened to and laughed at his schoolboy chatter, and wanted to know all that he was doing and meant to do.

After he had left us she sat with me by the window silent, looking out with the wistful expression I had seen years ago in Egypt. We made no plans now, and spoke neither of the past nor of the future, and when at last it grew dark and I had to leave her we said no good-bye, although I think I knew that I should never see her again. But there was no need for us to speak."

She sent this little poem, written some years earlier, to a paper, the *Church Family Newspaper*, where it was published.

" The last red leaf floats down the breeze
Beneath a gloomy autumn sky,
And desolate and bare, the trees
Uplift their naked arms on high ;
And all things perish, fast, so fast ;
But love shall last, but love shall last !

The nesting bird is flown and gone,
The swallow leaves the wintry sky,
The butterfly's brief day is done,
Dead is the darting dragon-fly.
All happy things have fled, have fled ;
And love is dead, and love is dead ?

The thicket bursts with tender green,
The primrose stars the mossy vale ;
In yonder budding copse is seen
The covert of the nightingale ;
The swallow seeks the summer sky ;
Love cannot die, love cannot die."

I subjoin a few of her letters written during her illness :—

(*To Miss Gourlay.*)

June 14, 1908.

My own, thank you so much for the "poetical peaches"—I had one at once, and it was very good. As the bottle hasn't come yet, I don't quite understand of what kind it may be.

When you wrote to me last you said that, until I was well again, my business was yours. Do take all the care of Gladys, as well as of yourself, that you can. Of course I want to see you both, only I don't think that it would be good for either of you at present. Everybody tells me that I am getting very much better quickly, and that all I can do is to have "blind faith," in the doctor, and patience. Goodbye, my own, I wish I could come to your pictured hands. Give my love and thanks to Gladys for her beautiful present,

Yours,

M. B.

(*To Miss Gourlay.*)

April 13, 1909.

My dearest, thank you for sending me the plants. I was grieved to hear of your sad news. How I wish I could wake and find myself at home with you and others who cared for me so much—Mother and Hugh and Beth.

I went out in the garden and driving two or three times last week, but have been in bed the last two days. I have a little canary here which Mother sent from London, but nothing thrives here well.

Yours,

M. B.

(*To Miss Gourlay.*)

July 30, 1909.

MY DEAR NETTIE,

I see in this morning's paper the death of your brother's little boy. I am very sorry to hear it, but I know you feared he would not live. They will be grieving for his death, but he is free from this weary world.

All the world seems so full of trouble.

I am ill and wretched and don't know what to do. And all I try to do seems to go wrong.

When you write, will you tell V—— and A—— how sorry I am for their trouble.

I wish I could believe that I should get well again ; things used to seem happy or at least hopeful in the old days. I wonder where and why they went wrong.

You say you are going to Girton to-morrow, so I will send this letter there—as perhaps you may go to R—— on your way.

. . . . . .

Yours,
MARGARET BENSON.

(*To Miss Gourlay.*)

The Priory.
Jan. 15, 1910.

My dearest, I don't forget that to-morrow was the day on which I first saw you. We had some happy times after that, at least I thought them happy. I wish I had behaved more worthily, and not brought such sorrow upon you and others. I

thought I saw you out the other day and tried to get to you.

Yours,
M. B.

(*To Miss Bevan.*)

St. Mawes.
August 13, 1914.

You asked me some time ago to send you a sketch, so I am sending one of Pendennis I have done since I was here. The place is really very pretty . . . To St. Mawes itself I have never been before, though I have passed it. It is strange, however, to see all the places about so warlike, and yet to have the contrast of such absolutely quiet and peaceful-looking scenes —children playing and wading on the beach, and people boating and swimming, though the costumes they go about in, and the way in which the children (visitors mostly I think) go barelegged, even when they are not wading, is unusual at least. When one picnics, one comes across parties of soldiers, or the boats pass full of them ; and landing at Falmouth the hotel close to the pier is guarded, and the road by which we used to drive round Pendennis stopped by sentries. Two large German steamers coming before war was declared, were detained in the harbour, and the passengers have now been landed in Falmouth.

(*To her Brother Arthur.*)

Wimbledon.
Dec. 19, 1914.

. . . . . .

Thank you so much for sending your book "The Beauty of Life"—which I received to-day. It

seems a beautiful book. I am sure I shall enjoy reading it if, in the old phrase, "I am spared to do so." Some of the extracts, of course, I know and like already, from knowing your books and other writings in which they first occurred, but more I think are from books of yours which I have never seen. It is well illustrated too, though the choice of the months in which the extracts illustrated occur are not such as would always have most obviously suggested themselves.

I should like to send you something nice for Christmas, but I feel utterly "épuisée"—I don't know if any English word quite expresses it—of ideas and of force. One doesn't know enough, one can't, from the little one does know, *account*, so that even the attempt to acquire knowledge is futile. One's will is fettered, and if it were not, one's action is fettered—and then one feels the pathos for other people, who cared for beautiful and good things both of this world and the next, more than I can remember doing, (though I *did* care, and tried to express it a little in writing and more in sketching); the first two lines of the extract from the Ode on Gray (included in your new book), I have sometimes thought of as descriptive of yourself—your own love of writing—and I know you were so much interested in people, in books, in nature, in so many things.

I don't see how it is possible not to fear death in *any* case. Yet it is imaginable—in fact one must believe it—that people face death for some great cause or some great devotion. I suppose people have done so even who have not believed in an after-life. But supposing one feels that there

is not even any great or good purpose to be served ?

. . . . .

(*To her Brother Arthur.*)

Wimbledon.
Dec. 29, 1914.

My dear Arthur,

I want to write and tell you how much I like "The Orchard Pavilion," which Mamma sent me for a Christmas present. It seems to me such a very clever *real* modernising of the old Platonic discussion of the relation between the good, the true and the beautiful—theme, language and setting all really modernised. One feels a little bored sometimes if a modern theme is put in the "Now tell me, Alcibiades" . . . "No indeed, Socrates . . ." mannerisms, or if modern typical names are translated into Greek or Latin (why Latin ? though I have seen it) equivalents.

In which connection I think it is a very clever minor point that after a first reading one remembers only Roderick's Christian name, Norman's surname, and both Christian and surname of Harry Knollys.

It seems to me a very interesting point that you coupled individual human love and friendship with science—the representation of truth *as* truth—(for one can't call Roderick's feeling more than affectionateness), and that you gave to Norman too more power of understanding and being understood in the less developed days, than to the representative of Religion, in the individual case ; but that later Knollys has such a far wider outlook and power of understanding the better elements in human nature,

and being able to make them respond to him—through a so much wider range of humanity.

And yet you have made Roderick the means of bringing the three together, and his flashes of perceptive genius are delightful and his mistakes, such as expecting Harry Knollys to address his sermon to himself and Fred Norman. The setting is very pretty too—and the scrap of country talk (though I believe black hens lay white eggs, and it is a matter of breed).

Your book reminded me of Dickinson's "Meaning of Good." I read yours faster than I wished—I wanted to save it up—nor is it so full in content, I think. As far as I remember he thinks that athletics are felt to be the chief good in youth, and then hasn't he *turris scientiae*, *turris artis*, and *turris cordis*, the progressive soul going from the first into the second and then into the third? I don't remember that he has any view about religion, but as I had to read it quickly, I cannot trust my memory of it much.

Your loving sister,
MARGARET BENSON.

(*To her Brother Arthur.*)

Wimbledon.
March 31st, 1915.

MY DEAR ARTHUR,

I must write and thank you for having your memoir of Hugh sent to me. I have been reading it with very great interest. I suppose, comparatively to his great outburst of intellectual activity later, his intellectual powers were somewhat in abeyance in earlier life, after he went to Eton—he won the

scholarship only on the second attempt, and wasn't placed high—still he did win a prize poem at Eton though he left early—he published poems in some American Magazine before he went to Cambridge, I think ; he wrote little articles in some small magazine on the early fathers, I think, and considering, the fact that his work was interrupted by trying for the Indian Civil Service (during that time he learnt enough Italian to debate in it, and to talk to Count Campello when he came to the Lambeth Garden Party) and then by beginning to study for the Classical Tripos, do you think a third in the Theological Tripos *was* low ?—he read the Gospel at his Ordination of course, as being the best candidate in the way of attainments, I believe most decidedly so.

I know he was sometimes vehement in argument because he felt things so strongly. In one of the cases you quoted he was arguing against criticism of the individual—yet he was quite extraordinarily patient with one constantly, both in talking and in writing ; though he could speak or write sternly too, he seldom wrote sternly. I am sorry he felt that he had deficiencies which made him shy with other people—I suppose he did not know how inspiring a companion he was, even when one quarrelled with him—which I regret so much having done. He was *very* good to me. I think you give the picture of a most vital personality, as he was—in fact life seems to have died out of the world now. Even after the illnesses he went through, and his absences, still he came back, but if he comes back no more, life seems dead. Yet it was a splendid way to die in the middle of his work. But he was the only person in those years who gave one any sense of

religion—and one felt the love of God was the essence of it, and the love of humanity came next. I don't mean a blank undifferentiated equal liking—there were people he disliked very much, no doubt, but he was always ready to help. I think it was a wonder how he did manage to enjoy of late years, with all the various difficulties, troubles, and illness, strain—and such a fearful pressure of work. Even when he was recovering from the operation, he had people come to see and ask him things—Father Maturin came to ask him some question about Rome one of the days I went to see him at Hampstead.

There are, of course, things I don't agree with. I don't think that the truth is expressed by saying that he had no interest in social institutions or politics so much, as that for these to be any good he felt they must be inspired by religion—that was his primary interest—he was interested in politics, for instance, when the religious question came in, and in this war; he told me he did not want to die before the end of it; he hoped the "allies" would dictate terms of peace to Germany in Berlin. Perhaps he never knew I did care about him, or appreciate his intense kindness.

Fred has been good in coming to see me. He told me you were going to Tremans for Easter. I went to see a little play of his last week—it was amusing.

How one longs for the old days, imperfect as they were—but one has no confidence that one would live them better.

Your loving sister,

MARGARET BENSON.

(*To her Brother Arthur.*)

Wimbledon.
June 5, 1915.

. . . . .

You say the whole house was full of memories, happy enough at the time, but you didn't want it back again. One couldn't imagine, of course, having it back again ; what one does want is some worthy outcome of the happier memories, not from feeling that what is separating one now from one's contemporaries, from the best of the spirit of the past, from any reality of home again or even from any idea of home life was at work even then, while the consciousness of the spirits of the children that we were was only gradually unfolding.

. . . . .

At last a physical malady of the heart developed, and once or twice her mind was cleared of all delusion ; but her strength slowly declined. In the last week of her life, she woke one morning and said to her nurse with a radiant smile, " Eureka ! " (I have found) " God *is* in the world ; He is love ; it is all love ! " She spent two very happy days with my mother and brother full of talk and humorous stories and old recollections. The storms had passed over, leaving a bright sky at the last. She was once more as she had been before she went down into the darkness. " She was just her old self," writes my mother, " and most affectionate ; she quoted Browning, and soon, in the old way, began to look for ' Principles ' of Love itself." On the next day she had a long and quiet talk to my mother, about Our Saviour at Gethsemane. In the evening,

the last evening of her life, she recurred much to earlier days, quoted old jokes and told old stories to my mother and Lucy Tait with immense delight. She might, the doctor said afterwards, have died at any moment. She said good-bye very cheerfully to my mother, making her promise to return early on the next day. "Promise you will come before I die," she said; she told her nurse to call her early, so that she might not lose a minute of the talk. "I *must* go on with that talk." "Well, I *have* had a happy day!" she said presently; and a little later the nurse heard her say softly to herself:

"As pants the hart for cooling streams
When heated in the chase,
So longs my soul, O God, for Thee
And Thy refreshing grace."

She spoke no more, and fell quietly asleep. In the early hours of the morning she stirred, moved a little, but did not awaken, and in a moment ceased to breathe. The order of release had come at last.

Her body rested for three nights in the crypt of the chapel at Lambeth, and on the following afternoon she was buried beside her sister at Addington on a bright day of May—not a day of mourning, but a festival of joy.

I remember how, as we stood beside her grave, a dove rose with beating wings out of a tree close at hand, soared into the air, and flew blithely to the deeper woodland. The beautiful words of Chateaubriand came to my mind, "Fly hence, happy bird, to the shadow of the pines!"—and then again I remembered the verse, "My soul is escaped even as a bird from the snare of the fowler; the snare is broken and we are delivered."

CHAPTER XV

BOOKS

Some writers of books, those to whom literature is the best and final expression of their criticism of life, put all their strength and sweetness and lightness into books, and have in consequence little of such qualities to spare for life. But spirits with a wider range, to whom books are but small fragments and broken reflections of the life-current, use books partly as a little anchor to work, and partly to summarise thoughts that cannot be exactly distributed in conversation. It was a great good fortune for Maggie that she was brought up by my mother. My mother, though I may frankly say that she has great imaginative power and remarkable gifts of expression in speech and letter-writing, both epigrammatic and suggestive, had no training for writing, and her married life began so early, was so filled by companionship with my father, whose nature demanded a partner at once sympathetic and critical, by social duties, and by the care and teaching of her children, that she was never tempted away from life into literary work. Thus Maggie had always life itself in view, and her books were only a kind of by-play for leisure hours. Moreover Maggie's own emotions and affections were always the central

fact of her life, and she gave to her friends what others put into their books. Then, too, her life was much broken into by social duties, ill-health, travel, and she had seldom time to concentrate herself. Moreover she worked very slowly, adding touch to touch; and though she had a story-telling gift, much delicate observation, and a keen eye for both pathetic and humorous incidents, she had not, I believe, either great imaginative power, or the dramatic faculty of contrasting and marshalling characters.

I always think that "Subject to Vanity" and "The Soul of a Cat" show a great power of psychological analysis, together with one very marked literary aptitude, the power of leaving off with a snap, and never trailing her subject indecisively off the scene. Her lesser writings, such as the manual on Capital and Labour, and the tractate on Christian Science, are clear and thorough. What she always wished to do, what in a manner she accomplished, was to write a book on religious experience of a philosophical kind; and the result of many years of thought and study is to be found in "The Venture of Rational Faith."

This is a book which I am quite incapable of criticising, if not of comprehending, though I am able to discern its lofty and suggestive quality. I have therefore asked my cousin Stewart McDowall, who, perhaps, more than anyone else discussed the subject with my sister, to send me a few paragraphs about it. He writes:—

"Fifteen years before 'The Venture of Rational Faith' was completed, Maggie sat down to write a

book of Christian apologetic—and never wrote it. This was to be expected, for she was by nature no believer in the ordinary method of apologetic, which to her was vitiated at the source. Her mind was too clear to rest satisfied with any argument based on a contradiction, as a completely logical apologetic must be.

"Instead, she turned to the convergence of evidence. One line of thought was followed as far as seemed legitimate, and then another. She was content to prove that many radii converged towards one centre; and was not at all deterred by the inevitable fact that they could not be completely traced and connected.

"Quite clearly she showed that there must be a venture in the long run; but a venture of hope, or reasonable faith, not doubt.

"By infinite subdivision and consideration of *states*, one can get at an approximation, but knowledge will never achieve *truth*—there must be a *venture*, even of rational faith—this is her central theme; and I take it that she desired to indicate the gradation of rational approach, in order to give a good 'take-off' for the necessary leap.

"Maggie was thoroughly alive both to the implication of her method, and its necessity, as her use of one of the Eleatic paradoxes shows. Reckoning always by fractions and infinitesimal parts, Achilles would never catch the tortoise. Yet even so it is clear that they get closer together. But make the bold leap; take the whole, instead of laboriously adding fraction to smaller fraction; and in a dozen paces Achilles has passed the tortoise.

"Following her method, she turns with remarkable

versatility from one aspect of life and thought to another, and deals adequately with all, with many brilliantly. Yet all the time it is a point of view she inculcates; she does not furnish a proof. The venture must be made; only let it be with open eyes!

"Here and there lurk traces of the earlier apologetic intention—then we are conscious of a certain inadequacy, as is natural, for they are vestiges outgrown, and foreign to the real purpose of the book. But in the main, as in her letters, she is concerned to formulate right principles of religious thought—'learning's crabbed text'—leaving to the experience of life 'the comment.'

"Perhaps the most striking feature of the whole is its sheer commonsense and clarity. There is hardly a single instance of question-begging or of circular argument; and an admirable terseness that is sometimes epigrammatic gives keen pleasure to the reader. Often in one short paragraph, such as that on the doctrine of Karma (p. 202) a few words lay bare the root-principles of a doctrine.

"No doubt the proportions of the work are not perfect, but that is inevitable when so much ground has to be covered in a moderate number of pages; and this objection, besides, loses much of its force when the character of the book is understood. Comparative weakness in one section or another affects the whole but little.

"Maggie's private letters on matters connected with the philosophy of religion are coloured with her irresistible humour, trenchant or merely laughter-bringing, but always wise. In 'The Venture of Rational Faith,' she writes with a more restrained

pen, but the same humour peeps out occasionally, especially in the preface. Nevertheless I cannot help wishing she had not exercised so strict a censorship. Without humour the book would be a very imperfect reflection of a great personality; and it is as the reflection of a human mind, singularly complete as well as singularly able, and as the portrayal of its reasoning and its faith, that 'The Venture of Rational Faith,' is vivifying and suggestive in so great a degree."

The books, then, which my sister left, do not in any sense, I think, cover the whole ground of her mind. Her philosophical and religious position is defined; while the books about animals just show her minute and scientific power of amassing and interpreting detail, and give a glimpse of her recognition of the wonder and strangeness and beauty of life. But they form only illustrations of sides of her character, and do not fully represent her. They neither exhibit her deepest affections, nor her religious life, nor her devotion to duty. Her sense of the beauty of nature found expression in her painting. Many of her little sketches hang on my walls, and have a high poetical quality. Even in her last illness she retained her swift and subtle touch, and I have a little watercolour sketch of hers, done on her last visit to Falmouth, of a tract of pastureland intersected by hedges and fringed with copses, all seen over the blue waters of the great estuary, which seems to express in its delicacy and feeling a deep longing for something which life had once given her and which she had lost awhile.

But the emotions which filled her heart, her

desire for the presence and talk of those whom she loved, from these she could not, I believe, sufficiently separate herself to make any spectatorial use of them. They were too urgent and vital, they meant too much. I always believe that dramatic creation is as a rule the work of people who perceive delicately rather than feel deeply. I mean that unless a nature can isolate itself and see life with a certain hardness and toughness, the contact with emotion is too tragic a thing to be represented or lightly talked about. To Maggie, emotion was too vivid a thing to allow her to perceive its artistic quality ; what the artist has to do is not to quarry out the stuff of his own soul, but to work experience into something symbolical into which others can read their own emotions. Maggie was too reserved, too reverent to use her own experience so ; while her analysis of character was scientific rather than creative. Thus she was silent about the matters which were her closest concern, and of her love and suffering there was no self-made memorial. It must be inferred rather than told, and the sacred depths must remain unplumbed, in a mystery of which one is at least aware that the hidden fire and glow of it was something far mightier and stronger than the little sparkles that broke from the prow, as it mounted the dancing waves of childhood and youth, or laboured among the great breakers of sorrow through which she took her solitary way.

CHAPTER XVI

CHARACTER

My sister had, I do not doubt, a great intellect, both clear and profound. Her memory was strong and accurate, and she had a firm grasp of any problem, however complicated, to which she addressed herself in her quiet and deliberate fashion. In economics, which were only a side-study, she not only saw principles lucidly, but with a sense of their proportion and value, while she had a comprehensive grasp of detail. It was the same with all her subjects; in Egyptology, she acquired a great knowledge of historical and archæological detail; in Biblical study, she followed developments of modern criticism with a keen interest, but never lost sight of the fact that religion is a very different thing from a knowledge of its history and its varying tendencies. In philosophy, which was I think her most constant interest, she had a very accurate knowledge of different systems, and a clear conception of philosophical ideas. If she had been a man she would, I do not doubt, have been a great student, and might have done valuable philosophical work. But as things were, these pursuits were to her private interests, which she followed for her own delight, when leisure permitted. She had a

great faculty of working on quietly and alone, and was not in the least dependent on intellectual sympathy and companionship. These various branches of work were always waiting in the background. She never made them an excuse for not performing practical duties. She took them up sedately and unhurriedly, but was always willing to lay them aside, without the least irritability or disappointment, if anything came in her way, a piece of organisation or administration, an appeal for sympathy or help, a human companionship, a little domestic detail. She seldom talked about her work, never appeared burdened by it or absorbed in it, never brandished it in the face of an intruder. She had indeed, I always thought, a serener tolerance for interruptions than anyone I knew. At the time, for instance, when I was writing my father's life, in the middle of hard work as a boarding-house master and tutor, the help she gave me was inestimable. There were certain complicated episodes in my father's life, notably the Lincoln Judgment, involving a minute acquaintance with ecclesiastical law and usage, and passing through intricate stages of legal procedure, which could hardly be mastered except by conversations with experts to whom the difficulties and details were familiar. All this she took quietly in hand, and had long and careful talks with the present Archbishop, with the result that she smoothed out all the complexities, and presented me with a compact statement of the essential facts, perfectly arranged. She also subjected the whole book to the most minute detailed criticism at every stage, which was of the utmost value.

But besides this intellectual grasp, she had a

great gift for organisation and administration. She did not merely sketch out a fruitful idea, and leave it to others to work out the details. In her various schemes for Biblical Study, the St. Paul Association, the Vacation Term meetings, the Archbishop's Diploma for women, she undertook correspondence, she made arrangements, she drew up syllabuses and lists of books, she directed workers, she spared herself no drudgery. If her health had allowed, she might have been a very effective Principal of a Woman's College, because she could have lectured, managed finances, directed a staff of officials, while she would never have lost her personal interest in and sympathy with individuals. She had, in fact, inherited a large share of my father's extraordinary gift for organisation together with his personal ascendency and active guidance. She felt, indeed, an overpowering sense of responsibility for the lives and characters of those with whom she was brought into contact, and blamed herself severely if things went wrong with them. But this influence was never obtruded. She shrank from censuring or finding fault, though she could speak and write sternly, if necessary; and she was entirely free from the temptation to which masterful natures are prone, of having their influence recognised and deferred to. She did desire to exercise influence, and I have had much correspondence with her at various times about particular cases, entanglements, misunderstandings, perversities of conduct, habits insensibly acquired. In all these cases she felt a deep desire to effect something, but it was always done with a sensitive tact; and instead of interfering personally, she planned very anxiously that

criticism should reach the person concerned through natural and obvious channels, so as to avoid suspicion and resentment, and above all, humiliation.

Strongest of all was her emotional nature; she was deeply and loyally affectionate, and her friendships and loves were by far the deepest and strongest part of her life. Besides her family letters, I have had before me her correspondence with one of her closest friends, Miss Nettie Gourlay, who excavated with her, helped to write the big Egyptian book, and assisted her in many enterprises. Miss Gourlay was a great invalid and suffered much from disabling illness. But she had a deep capacity for affection, a warm and generous heart, and a clear and strong judgment. The letters, from which I have often quoted, reveal the deepest and tenderest devotion. My sister depended greatly upon Miss Gourlay's calmness and courage and her clearness of vision. Maggie was well aware of her own weaknesses. For her emotions were easily stirred, overmastering her judgment and preventing swift insight into character. She felt things with an exaggerated sensitiveness, and here Miss Gourlay's balance and serenity and patience helped her greatly.

But Maggie herself combined with this power of idealising and worshipping her friends a faculty which is not often found in combination with deep affection. She had a profound interest in varieties of character as well as a great sense of humour; and there was no one who could, after the first intense attraction had mellowed, survey her friends more dispassionately and critically, note their faults and failures in a dry intellectual light, understand

the balance and proportion of a temperament, and yet never for a moment be untrue to her affection. She cared intensely about reality, and had no fancy for illusions. She never thought it a treachery to see a friend in the brightest light, and though she loved loyalty, she did not condone faults or wish to be luxuriously blind. And here it was that her strength lay. She used to blame herself for a constitutional timidity, and think that she ought sometimes to have spoken more freely and frankly. But this beautiful reticence and reserve gave an added strength to her sympathy, because her affection was the one obvious and visible thing, and no one had ever any cause to fear her arbitrary interference. At the same time, if one confessed or deplored a weakness, it was found to have been noted, and she did not seek to reassure you by pretending that she was not aware of it, but proffered not only sympathy, but often indeed the frankest admission that she recognised the same fault in herself, and had devised ways of meeting and curing it. The frankness of friendship is a difficult matter. If it is intrusive or critical, it may be wholesome, but it is apt to terminate the relation. Few friendships survive obvious disapproval; and indeed if it is spontaneously stated, it is generally a clear enough sign that a friendship is wearing thin. But though I myself, in the years when I was nearest to Maggie, spoke and corresponded freely with her about our personal failures and deficiencies, I never had the uneasy sense that she was likely to indulge in criticism, though she could give it faithfully and tenderly if it was asked for.

At one time, however, it may honestly be said,

her critical faculty showed signs of lifting its head. This was a curious psychological problem. During my father's lifetime, I believe that Maggie lived in some awe of him. She loved him, I think, better than she understood him. His own displeasure, when it came, was extremely disconcerting and awe-inspiring. He was never aware how much powder, so to speak, he put into his gun, and a comment, which he perhaps meant to be light and sympathetic, had often the effect of suggesting a deep reserve of severity. Maggie was extremely sensitive, and anything like anger or sternness produced a bewildering and silencing effect upon her, quenching her gaiety and spontaneity. If she could have met my father, as my sister Nellie did, with a mixture of gaiety and courage and concern and deference, no harm would have been done. But Maggie so shrank from a scene, or from any evidence of severity, that she never gave my father her full confidence, though they were much devoted to each other, and he had a great respect for her powers.

When he died, I think that for a time the instinct which she undoubtedly had for making herself felt, somewhat emerged, and she tended to criticise more unsparingly than had been her wont other people's schemes of life. I may quote a small instance. When I was editing Queen Victoria's letters, I found that it was not possible to work with clearness and accuracy for more than a certain number of hours in the day. After that the detail grew blurred. I found refreshment in writing the Upton Letters out of my imagination and experience. Among her letters I find one to Miss Gourlay about me, saying that she is alarmed at my state of mind,

that I am avowedly writing a book in which I refuse to submit to the least drudgery, and that she fears that my freedom from settled work is having a deteriorating effect upon me. This is an instance of a morbid judgment; because the book was being deliberately written as a contrast to the close and tense drudgery which was involved in the reading and selecting from a vast and intricate correspondence.

It was really, I am sure, the effect upon her of the removal of my father's extraordinary personal dominance, and a singular instance of a suppressed faculty emerging from subordination. It may partly too have been the obscure pressure of her final malady showing itself, but in the ten years, very happy for the most part, between my father's death and her own collapse, there were times when she disquieted herself and tormented herself, unduly and unreasonably, about her relations with her immediate circle, felt that she was not doing her duty, not bearing testimony, not using her influence boldly, while at the same time she mistrusted and criticised the standards and methods of her nearest and dearest. She was aware, I know, that these were moods; when they cleared away, she spoke humorously and conciliatorily about them, and confessed with admirable frankness that she did not do justice to other theories of life. But this Puritanical element in her cannot be disregarded. In spite of her tenderness and sympathy she was not at all indulgent to what seemed to her to be moral weakness or laxity, in herself or in others. She disliked and contemned it, and hardly realised how much more effective her eager delight in

companionship and confidence was than her moods of disapproval.

Her intellectual vision was clear and profound, and here her control was both complete and delicate, but over her emotions she never had the same instinctive control ; they often carried her far out of her course for a time, and caused her great perplexity. Yet even so it must be added that this was not the case with those who sought help from her, with them she was always clear-sighted, wise, and kind.

She had an extraordinary power of sympathy as well as of inspiration ; and those who knew her and loved her and were loved by her in return, found her fine judgment and clear sight, not less than her anxious good will and passionate devotion, at once the controlling and sustaining and uplifting force of their lives.

A friend writes—

"One of Maggie's most marked characteristics was her extraordinary generosity. It showed itself continually and continuously and seemed so entirely taken for granted by her that I am sure she was hardly aware of it. 'Generosity' is perhaps an ambiguous word and hardly expresses what I mean. Many people are generous ; to most people the mere act of giving is a pleasure. Hers was rather the joy of *sharing*. She could make it a real joy to receive ; and this I think is a much rarer quality. And all with the same child-like unconsciousness, as though her gifts had come to her by a mere chance and she shared them with others as an obvious act of justice. Nor was such help given impulsively and then put out of mind. Maggie would spend uncounted time and thought and trouble over a

case, would weigh and adjudge the facts with the piercing insight which she possessed, and then act with a liberality which was neither more nor less than amazing considering the claims which were daily made upon her and how many she thus dealt with. And not for her friends alone would she do this, but for friends' friends, even those who were only names to her; and not on one occasion only, but again and again as fresh developments brought fresh needs. A brother of one of Maggie's friends lost his work through intemperance; but the case did not seem hopeless at first, for it was thought that he might pull himself together and make a fresh start. But while he was looking for work he was unable to send the money with which he had helped to support his mother, and moreover came for his own maintenance to his young married sister, who was at her wits' end to know how to deal with the situation, being unable to afford to keep him but having no heart either to turn him adrift or to tell the bad news to the mother. Maggie had never even seen the man; but she heard the story and acted with the resource and generosity which were so absolutely characteristic. She tried through her brothers to get literary work for him in the first place, and when he proved hopeless in this way tried to get him into touch first with one temperance expert and then with another in order to try to effect a cure. On another occasion a friend's friend lost his work through misfortune and it was necessary that he should at once earn a living in some new way. He decided to become a typist, and Maggie, on hearing this, immediately lent him her own typewriter, sent him work, and got other people to do the same.

Again and again she paid the expenses of those who came from a distance to stay with her, and sent help to those upon whom a sudden burden might be thrown, or who were overtaken by some illness or misfortune. I could go on relating such instances by the score out of my own personal knowledge; for I often wrote letters at Maggie's dictation which dealt with them, and never wrote without inward wonder and amazement, but the real number and extent will never be told or even dreamed of. And it was not in material ways only that this characteristic generosity was shown, nor even in the sympathy and tenderness which went with the gift. I believe that if it had been possible she would have shared her intellectual possessions in the same way, just as her brother Hugh really enjoyed trying to teach some one else 'how to write a story,' supplied the main materials for such a work, and took for granted that it should appear under the name of another. So, too, I have known Maggie take endless trouble to look up and verify facts for someone who was writing an article and was stuck for lack of accurate knowledge. She would at any time correct or advise upon a piece of writing submitted to her and would make notes and suggestions which would perhaps add incalculable value to the whole, and then return the MSS. to the sender and perhaps forget the matter entirely. She would lend books or lend her sketches to be copied, or would discuss by post with others the difficulties that arose in their careers, and advise and help in all sorts of crises."

Her humour was constant and permeated all she

said, but when she was really ill, it had a way of vanishing. She said once to me that it did not go down to the bottom of her mind, and that left to herself she was uncompromisingly serious. She spoke of it as a mood, created by sunshine and company and casual absurdities. She could not abide light humour or jocosity, and said once gravely that Dickens made her feel sick, because she disliked everything farcical. In this she much resembled my father. Her wit was rare and rather caustic, and she gave apt and severe names to acquaintances. One frequent visitor, with a meek and dim and rueful face, she named "the waning moon," and another severe and bustling lady, with a tendency to improve and censure the world at large, she called "the Governess General." She did not delight in incongruities, nor was she amused by them; but, on the other hand, when she was confronted with some really ridiculous event, she could abandon herself to helpless and exhausting laughter.

My brother Fred remembers how at Aix he played at the game of *p'tits chevaux* and won twenty francs. She was shocked at this, and remonstrated with some severity. When she had finished, my brother meekly offered her three francs to mitigate her disapproval. Maggie, after struggling with sudden laughter, said that it was not enough, but added that she thought she might be able to dismiss the matter from her mind for four francs.

But as a rule in quiet talk she inclined, I used to think, towards fanciful, poetical, beautiful images rather than the directly humorous; yet her touch was always light, and a touch of something caustic, ironical and bracing saved her from any weakness

of sentiment. Indeed, I know no one so emotional and tender who was yet so free from sentiment. She was not demonstrative, and perhaps the very last word which could ever have been used of her was "gushing." Her talk was restrained and reserved, and there was always a sense that she had said less than was in her mind, perhaps because she was more interested in evoking her companion's point of view than in expressing her own; while the little incisive flash of her words, often accompanied by a characteristic little smile, gave a singular freshness to her talk.

I remember in the later days in one of the last talks I had with her, she was reproaching herself with having often been unkind to Hugh. I asked for an instance. She said in reply that when he was a little boy, he had seen a conjurer allow himself to be tied up hand and foot with cords, and then a screen being placed before him, he emerged in a moment free, with the cords in his hands. Hugh had insisted one day that she should tie him up to a yew-tree in the shrubbery, and he would loose himself. She did so and forgot all about him. At tea he was missing, and she hurried out. Hugh was still very firmly attached to the yew-tree, hot and red in the face with his struggles and deeply indignant.

"That was the *sort* of thing I mean," she added.

I said that Hugh was the last person to nourish grievances, and that no one would have been more heartily amused at the recollection than himself.

She gave a little smile, and said, "That is rather an incomplete idea of repentance, isn't it, if you are not to regret a wrong you have done because your victim is too good to resent it?"

My sister had in a supreme degree that elusive quality which is called distinction. It was not only that her intellect was clear and strong, her interests eager and various, her sympathies quick and deep. I have known men and women with these qualities singly and even in combination who have certainly lacked distinction. Nor was it only a harmony of life, the holding of many issues in a serene proportion. It was not so with my sister, for though she had a serenity of air and method, hers was far from being a serene nature. She was sensitive and anxious, her responsibilities weighed upon her, her impulses strove together. She did not limit herself to a single line—indeed, she might have achieved a more solid and tangible work if she had done so. But her output was baffled and checked by the freedom of her response to every call of duty and affection.

There was a certain mysteriousness about her, not calculated or dramatic, but a sense that she moved in a higher atmosphere, and held much in reserve. She seemed, when you caught a glimpse of her mind and heart, to be finely tempered and deeply discriminating. Her standards were fine, her judgment was penetrating and unfettered, she did not waste time in quarrelling with conventions, and yet was not in the least conventional. This was the secret of her appeal and her influence; because, though she welcomed comradeship and friendly contact, there was always the sense that her vision was penetrating and her approval not easily to be won. Yet she did not seem to rate her own ideals highly or to be in the least degree conscious of superiority—in fact, she suffered from the sense of ineffectiveness and inadequacy.

The strength of my sister's life lay in the fact that all sensitive and perceptive natures who came in contact with her recognised in her a spirit of stainless beauty which by its strength and sweetness and rarity revealed a further horizon, and touched to light the truer and larger issues of life. She suffered much and patiently; she was often in dire perplexity and weakness and despondency; but there was never a dreary lapse into cynicism or sentiment or fruitlessness, but the result of feeling deeply, and desiring greatly, and striving to discern what was best through many conflicting trials. She was, I think, one of those spirits which mark very surely the progress of the world, because she belonged to its future peace rather than to its present warfare. She paid a heavy price for this, but though sorely baffled and tormented, she did not live or suffer in vain.

One of her friends wrote to me not long ago about her death, and spoke of "her gentle, luminous life, a mind clear and calm, though so eager and generous." That is beautifully said, and wholly true; but it does not contain the whole truth, because it does not include one very marked characteristic—her moral strength, her courage, and indeed her sternness. It was this weighty element in the background, seldom emphasized, never obtruded, but yet undeniably there, which made her approval desired and welcomed, because it was not easily or lightly given. Her strength and courage were both evoked by the circumstances of her life. Many women in her position, threatened first of all with a crippling disease, and afterwards confronted with an illness both weakening and humiliating, would

have sunk into a life of helpless invalidism; but she threw herself with energy and determination into excavation, work, and practical schemes.

If she had held an official position, or taken work as a teacher, I am sure that her severity would have come out. It would not have been constantly in evidence. Sensitive herself to an acute degree, she had a deep dislike to inflicting pain; but she had a fund of moral indignation, and though her anger would have been rarely roused, it would have had the immense effect which the ultimate sternness of very gentle people ends by having. Professor Scott Holland, writing of Dean Church, who was the kindest and gentlest of men, describes the overpowering effect of his wrath when he was obliged to censure a flagrant offender for some moral obliquity—his pallor, his agitation, his terrible disdain, —a mood which, the Professor said, threw a strange light for him upon the mysterious phrase, "the wrath of the Lamb."

My sister, tolerant, sympathetic, finely-tempered as she was, made no terms with evil and did not condone it. She had a scorn and disgust for sensual, brutal, headstrong faults, and there are sentences in her letters about people whom she really mistrusted and disliked which stand out in fierce contrast to her habitual amiability. There was something of a priestly character about her, a consecration to pure and high ideals, and a consciousness of the conflict with evil which is involved in living in obedience to a moral standard, however secluded and remote from the world such a life may be.

As a rule, if her help was sought, she had a tentative and suggestive manner, letting one talk

on, guiding and consolidating the argument, but letting one make out one's own case and one's own cure. Her comments were fruitful and sowed a seed of thought, while she attracted great confidence by her beautiful smile, which began in her eyes, and lingered over her firm, small lips. But her lips were extremely impressive, and there was a downward curl of the lower lip which was well known to me whenever she spoke of mean, unjust, treacherous conduct, which conveyed a sense of abhorrence and even hostility, very clearly and definitely.

I am sure that her best work for individuals was done by stimulus and encouragement, because, without the least sense of superiority or impatience, you yet felt that she had gone deeper, seen further, felt more profoundly. She was not baffled by dilemmas or conflicting claims, because in philosophy and religion alike she had dug the foundations deep, and the truth, as she saw it, was not a shifting thing, which could be adapted and modified, but a real design, proportioned and deliberately constructed. She did not take either a strictly intellectual or a merely emotional view of moral questions, but combined both aspects as firmly as any one I have ever known. But she had a taste for responsibility and moral direction, which, as I have said, revealed itself at one period of her life ; and it may be doubted if stimulus and direction can be successfully combined. Her power of stimulus was very great, because, in the first place, her pure and lofty mind had a great charm about it, the charm of harmony and serenity ; while at the same time it was not one of the dry, clear-cut, and definite minds which make principles distinct but do not invest them with attractiveness.

She had a poetical touch derived from her sense of moral and artistic beauty; and it is, after all, the sense of beauty in moral things which transforms the world. No one is attracted by a theory of truth for truth's sake, or justice for the sake of justice. These are merely demonstrations of moral problems, and have not necessarily the least power to move the heart. A proposition of Euclid may be a manifestation of geometrical truth, but it affords no stimulus for the heightening of emotion. What really initiates moral progress is the kindling of admiration; and certain minds have a power of influence, because they kindle in other minds the wish to resemble them, the impulse to amend one's own conduct and view of life, the desire to share the beautiful secrets of so fine an example. People may be deterred from vice and scolded out of dishonourable and dishonest courses; yet nothing can create enthusiasm for virtue and honour but the realisation of their grace and beauty. It was here, I am sure, that my sister's great strength lay, in the sense which she gave of living a life largely and happily among fine ideas and beautiful thoughts, and living thus modestly and unaffectedly, yet at the same time intensely, eagerly, and vividly, among the things of the Spirit. Her mind moved easily and lightly among abstractions and ideas; but also she had a quick eye for the small things of life, beautiful scenes, the habits of animals, the whims and flashes of temperament, so that, wherever she lived, her life was full of swift impressions and the realisation of the smallest and finest shades of quality.

This, then, is my real reason for tracing her life and depicting her character. It is not only that I

have wished to recall, for the sake of love and tender companionship, the beautiful nature which I knew and loved ; but I am sure that the best gift that can be given to the world is not the romantic construction of an imaginary life, but a simple record of a real life, much beset and baffled by limitations and disasters, and yet full of sweetness and energy and glow.

The world suffers when men and women hoard and garner for themselves their knowledge of fine, distinct, beautiful characters, and when they refuse to share them. I do not want oblivion to cover up as with a cloak the courage and brightness of my sister's life and example. All the best things we know about the best human beings are things of which it might easily have been said that they were too sacred to be told. It is a better reverence to record and display them, and I shall be satisfied if but a few of those who may read these pages are encouraged to believe more firmly in the possibilities of life, and to find refreshment in the living stream of crystal clearness which not only makes glad the City of God, but redeems and purifies the world of men, for all its sorrow and pain.

CHAPTER XVII

RELIGION

Her religious faith was, I think, the deepest thing in her mind; it focussed and centralised all her other powers. It was in a high degree both rational and historical, and the interest she took in Hegelianism, which may be loosely defined as the sense of personality in the Universe, inferred from personality as the ultimate fact in man, was an indication of the line she followed. She was eager and conscientious about religious observance, such as Church services and family prayer, but her hold on these perhaps slackened a little as time went on, and became merged in a species of quietism. She became unwilling to give her opinion on points of doctrine and fundamental truths. She would give her view if consulted, but would add, "I am not the right person to ask about these things." She seemed latterly not to be so sure of her ground, and confessed to a certain morbidity about herself. She had a correspondence about 1906 with Bishop Wilkinson, in which she complained of a sense of insecurity in certain matters of faith, and of a doubt of her own sincerity. He wisely recommended her not to probe into details too much, and not to be too anxious in self-scrutiny, except on such broad

principles as those of the Beatitudes. The subject was brought rather emphatically before her by my brother Hugh's change of religious attitude, and she perhaps became aware that she did not set much store by formal doctrine, particularly if it were expressed in a definite and limiting way. She mistrusted any system which laid claim to peculiar privileges. A friend remembers her once saying, "I could not worship a God who was specially *my* God, and not the God of the whole world." At the same time she certainly held firmly to the comprehensive and Catholic attitude of Anglicanism, and spent much time in arguing a friend out of Presbyterian beliefs. In this case she was rather amused at the effect she produced, and said once, speaking of this particular friend, "Once upon a time I used to have to stir H—— up to come to church or to have a celebration at home; but now it is the other way, and H—— urges me."

"Prayer was the basis of her whole life," says a friend; "she prayed unceasingly for other people." "She was very childlike in her approach to God," my mother writes, "and intensely humble, but she never seemed to me to be quite able to take Him at His word with regard to herself, or to lose herself in Him." I do not think that there was anything that could be called exactly mystical about her. The mystic is one, it may be said, who has a direct and instinctive perception of a divine essence in things somewhat as the highly-developed artistic nature has a sense of beauty in material things, so that the mystic has an intuitive consciousness of the Divine Presence which can hardly be expressed in words. Maggie was not, I believe, made on these lines. I

imagine that she had a strong intellectual perception of the Personality of God, confirmed by experience, rather than a direct intuition, and that her prayers were made in faith and confidence to the Fatherly Spirit, Whom she discerned in every region of life, and of Whose loving intention to herself she was perpetually conscious. She wrote for her own use, and gave to her friends, the following prayer:—

"O Lord, we believe that Thou givest the peaceable fruits of Thy chastening to those who suffer and through them to others. Yet through Thy Son Jesus Christ Thou didst release those who through frailty of soul and body were bound by evil. O Lord, Who didst make the Captain of our Salvation perfect through suffering, and gavest Him the victory over sin and death, we beseech Thee to give us full content in Thy will, to rejoice in the fellowship of His sufferings or in His gift of life and health. We desire to live to Thy glory and for Thy service. Lord, increase our desire and strengthen our faith—and in desire and faith we pray, Lord, heal and strengthen Thy servant who putteth her trust in Thee."

She took, moreover, a great delight in certain hymns, which she committed to memory, and often said over softly to herself before she went to sleep or in wakeful hours. Such were:

"O God, of good the unfathomed sea," "Eternal Light, Eternal Light," "The Sands of Time," "Come, O Thou Traveller unknown," "Jesu, soft harmonious name," "I hunger and I thirst," "Quiet, Lord, my froward heart," and in particular the old version of "Jerusalem, my happy home," with all its quaint and beautiful imagery. Indeed, I think that though

she had little gift for poetical expression, there was no one to whom the beauty of poetry more deeply appealed ; it was the natural language of her heart, in religion as well as in daily life.*

She believed much in the study of the original documents of the New Testament, and much of her later work was in the direction of enforcing the necessity of religious knowledge because she disliked and dreaded shallow, sentimental, and current conceptions of religion, and believed in the duty of realising in how definite and philosophical a form Christianity had presented itself to the world ; she much mistrusted the blurring of its outlines and the partial dependence on certain texts, which presented only an aspect of truth. At the same time she did not consider herself too strictly bound by authority and tradition, because she believed in development and scientific investigation.

When she fell into darkness and sorrow at the time of her illness, and while her mind was swept with storms of grief and perplexity, one of her deepest miseries was the loss, not of her faith, but of any confirmation and assurance of it. She often spoke to me of this, and of the silence in Heaven of which she said she was aware. "I have nothing to hold on to—I cannot pray." But she did pray, and she continued to believe that her faith might be restored to her. She loved to go to St. Paul's with me, and we often sate, by the kindness of the Dean, in his private pew above the stalls of the choir, when, as she knelt or sate, she had a look of peace which one rarely saw at other times.

* She wrote an interesting article on Hymnology in the *Church Quarterly* in 1905.

One of her closest friends, writing about those latter days, says :

. . . . . .

" To me no recollection of the heyday of her splendid activities is so wonderful and so inspiring as her beautiful patience and gentleness in those last years of awful trial—cut off from the interests and occupations which had filled her life, and, as it seemed to her perplexed mind and heart, by the unkindness of those who should have cared for her most. And even the Love of God, which had been so much to her, hidden behind the dark cloud ; and yet through all the darkness holding fast to daily prayer, and the reading of the Bible, and her respect for the holy days of the Church. It used to fill me with the deepest reverence when I was with her, and those hours will always be the most precious memory of my life."

. . . . . .

I add two letters in which she spoke very fully and freely of her religion.

(*To Stewart McDowall.*)

Tremans.
May 28, 1899.

. . . But the other is in a sense the difficulty of life itself,—this, I mean, that there must always be a struggle,—that we must always be overcoming through the power of Christ.

But from what you say, I think there is *more* than this that you feel to be wrong,—something that there should not and must not be in the life of any one who

is trying to be a Christian. And if you are, as you say, trying to do right without God, it will and must always be a failure. I think I know what you mean very well. One tries to be *good enough*, and all seems going fairly well, when suddenly one finds it has all gone wrong. Just because it's an *impossibility* that we are trying, and in our very trying there is a shrinking from God. Sometimes we are afraid that if we cast ourselves upon God He will really take us at our word and make us much better than deep down we wish to be—which is true because He wills to make us perfect, and we want to be very fairly good, but don't want to give up what we may be called upon to give up or face what we may be called upon to face.

Well, as far as I know, the only thing we can do is to cast ourselves upon God : to say that we are there, His children, His servants, to be made what He wills, and then to cling by faith—by purpose—to the belief that He will do it. One thing that seems more and more true as life goes on is that God *does* answer prayer, and that people only cease to believe this because they cease to pray.

I don't think it is any good forcing *feeling*—trying to feel. To be able to *feel* that we love God, is a great gift that God bestows on some people, by nature perhaps ; but to many only after effort, or when they need it, or when they have lived in *His love as a fact*. Meanwhile, one may pray for it, and must,—and one may act on it,—for it *is* love, if you want to serve Him.

. . . . .

But the root of the matter is just the same—the question of whether one's heart and purpose is given

to God ; and the question of *how* one can do it ; for it seems an utter impossibility to get at one's real self—and one tries to do it by doing right without this, and it all ends in failure. Well, as I say, I believe the beginning and end is prayer,—prayer *believing that we shall receive ;* saying, ' I am not able, Father, to give myself—but I *will* to do it. Make me able.' It is often more help to pray often, (a sentence in one's mind, any time)—than to pray long prayers.

There is just one other thing. It sometimes gives one a great sense of strain, as if pleasing God were all a strain that one had to force oneself to. I think that is a false fear, for strain comes when one is halting between two opinions. There is struggle with oneself afterwards, but it is quite different, for God's deliverance is into freedom.

(*To Miss Beatrice Layman.*)

Tremans.

. . . . . .

. . . . . .

It is a big question ! In some ways I would rather talk. I don't believe one can give one reason, or even a set of simply logical reasons, occurring at a certain definite time. I think the best I can do is to tell you the kind of periods of realisation that one gets to. Of course one receives, and has to receive, so much on authority, which one can only verify little by little, through one's life, but I think the thing which is most convincing is that when one does so, one strikes across a great reality, so that the thing

one held before in one's mind only, which one was taught, which one thought over, and decided was theoretically rational, suddenly begins to live. Then after one has done that many times, one begins to realise that the other beliefs one holds are intellectual expressions of living reality, a sort of shorthand of what really exists.

I think it is generally some *necessity* which has driven me to these beliefs. When I was quite a child, I was told by someone the simplest instance of answered prayer—about a thing which was lost—and I tried it, and found the thing which I had lost and then began so to believe in prayer, that on certain occasions I felt I ought *not* to pray, because I was so sure I should get the thing, and wasn't sure it was right I should have it. And so at certain crises, in danger—in Egypt when I was supposed to be actually dying—or in times of distress—if I felt I *must* pray and so grappled in prayer, I always found relief—or if without distress I prayed quietly and confidently for a thing I knew was God's will,—long after, sometimes, I found it was coming to pass.

And then again later (through, I think, trying to make someone else realise something) I grasped for myself all at once what was meant by "Ye are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God," and "Christ that dwelleth in you——" I think very often what prevents one from realisation is the fact of never speaking of these things to any one else—if you see a person who needs the life that belief in Christ gives and say nothing, one's own realisation fades away,—if one tries to help, it suddenly becomes luminous and real.

I think always and all through these various

things are true. One hears on Authority—yet from people one most trusts—one tries to assimilate intellectually—one sees that all best things, and vital power in one's own life, lie on that side ; one finds one's own life wrought out with a certain purpose of this kind,—though (and often because) one finds one's own purposes thwarted sometimes at the point of realisation. One finds growth taking place unconsciously, and one asks what is that vital power which is forming me in spite of myself—one is pressed by some immediate distress and prays,—and one finds relief in some way or other—or one has a permanent desire for which one prays even intermittently, and one wakes to find it is being worked out.

It was very late before I realised any love for Our Lord. I was afraid of sentimentalism—and then I don't think I took any means—I didn't really think about His character or His life. I shrank from thinking of His *humanity*.

I don't know whether this will be any help or any good. You see from all these points one feels " such beliefs alone give any real *meaning* to life "—and when they become real they become *living* realities—and that conviction is, in a sense, a greater certainty—(even though one goes back in feeling and realisation *very often*) than any *simply* logical reason. Lives seem so barren, and thin without it—or so vague and unsatisfied.

This, then, was her belief—an anxious faith, in many ways, because it reflected the diffidence and introspectiveness of her mind, and because she constantly compared her progress with her ideals. There was much in her life and character which she

mistrusted and even feared, and earnestly desired to see changed, while she felt powerless to change it by a mere effort of will. She did not achieve serenity of contemplation, because, with her vivid sense of duty, she felt herself constantly responsible for her own shortcomings. Yet she had a deep vision of beauty and perfection, and her whole life was a conscious and even painful effort to draw nearer to it. She never relapsed into any complacency or self-satisfaction ; it was a ceaseless and faithful perseverance to do her part in life, to amend whatever was amiss, to cleanse and purify her own life and heart from all unworthy motives, and to fit herself for further adventures. She loved life as it was, and yet never acquiesced in its imperfection ; and I think that she always had in her mind that other City of God, with no precise forecast of imagination, but with a deep patience and a lofty hope.

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